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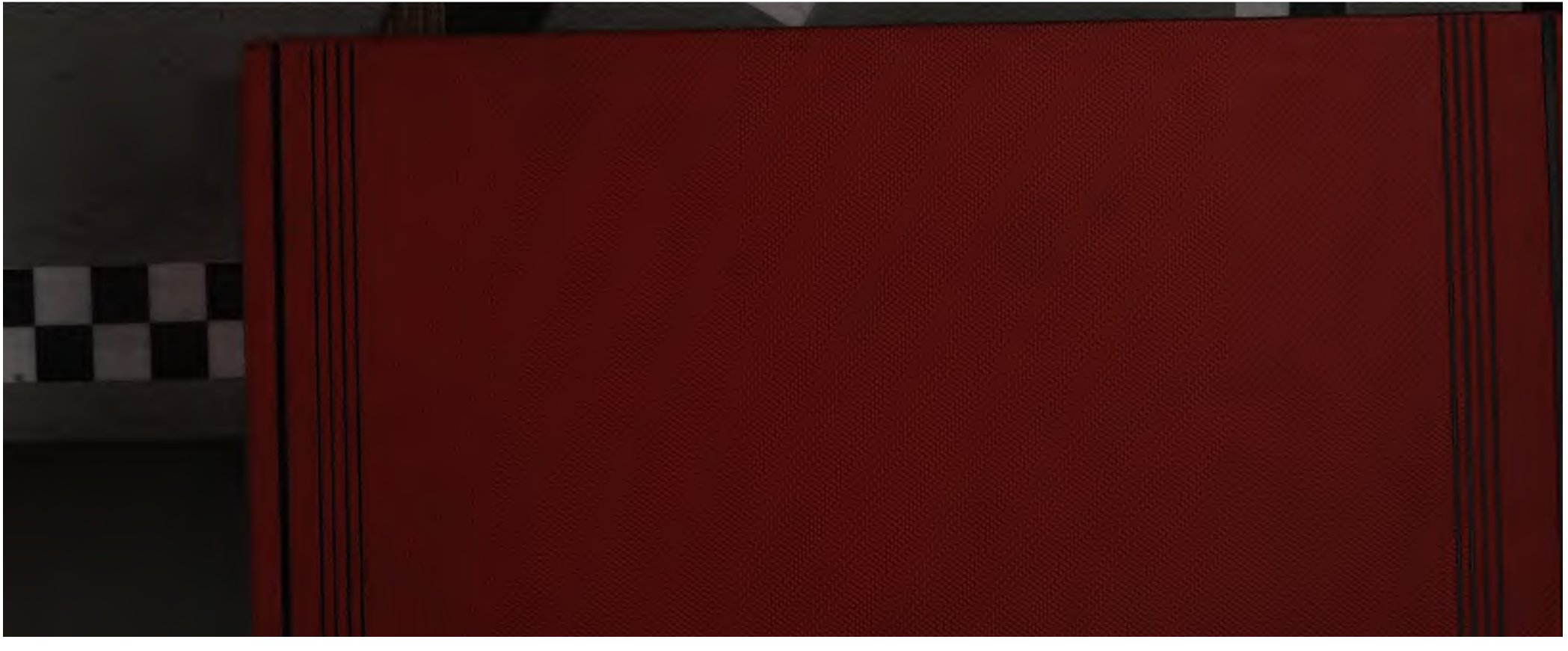

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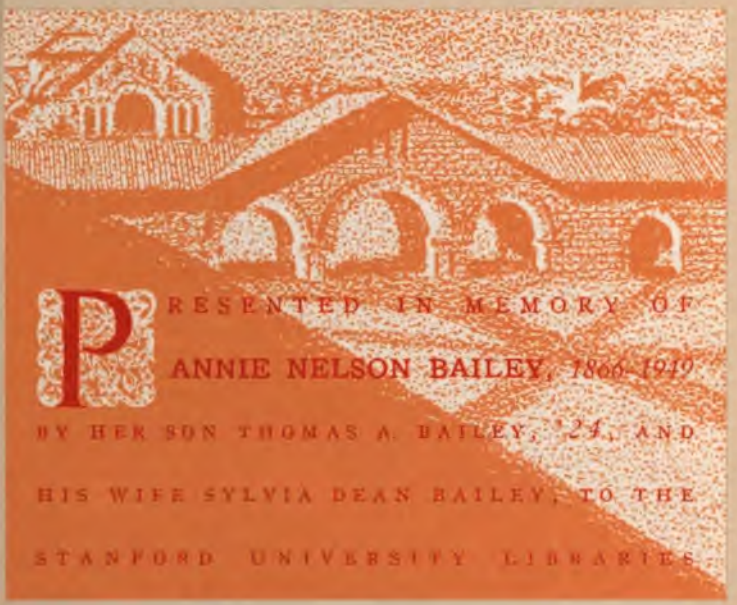

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ULSTER AS IT IS

ULSTER AS IT IS

OR

TWENTY-EIGHT YEARS' EXPERIENCE AS AN IRISH EDITOR

BY

THOMAS MACKNIGHT

Author of the "History of the Life and Times of Edmund Burke," "The Life of Lord Bolingbroke," "Thirty Years of Foreign Policy," &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

London

MACMILLAN AND CO., LTD.

NEW YORK: MACMILLAN & CO.

1896

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TO HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, K.G.

this book is

Respectfully Dedicated

by

THE AUTHOR

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ULSTER AS IT IS

CHAPTER I

1866

Position of the writer—An Ulster point of view—Admiration of Mr. Gladstone—An Englishman as an Irish Editor—State of the country—From London to Belfast—An Orange clergyman—The education question—Long memories.

I HAVE been induced to put on record some account of my experiences as an Irish editor as they have extended over considerably more than a quarter of a century. It is a long time to look back upon. During those years a social and political revolution, though it may yet be far from complete, has occurred in Ireland, and in the relations of eminent public men and great political parties to what may still be called the Irish problem. During that period I have at least been a close observer of what has been going on from day to day. I have had opportunities of judging from personal intercourse the motives which have animated public men in bringing forward a series of remedial measures that were one after another advocated, not as successive steps in a policy of separating the domestic legislatures of the three kingdoms, but as an alternative to any such policy, as more closely uniting

Ireland and Great Britain together on the old Liberal principle of equal laws. Such a record, not in the form of party controversy, but of a personal narrative from one who has nothing whatever to mislead his judgment, nor in any way to interfere with his independence, may, if drawn up with fairness, do something to inform the British public on matters which seem in their true aspects to be very little understood.

I write from an Ulster point of view. For eight-and-twenty years, as the editor of an invariably Liberal newspaper, which, as its opponents will admit, has played a not insignificant part in the political history of the province, I can scarcely be accused of having much sympathy with the evil spirit of sectarian and party intolerance with which Belfast and the North of Ireland have perhaps been much too indiscriminately associated. It will be acknowledged that, as the author of the *History of the Life and Times of Edmund Burke*, my sympathies with the Catholic millions of Ireland were shown long before I ever set a foot on Irish soil. I crossed the Irish Channel as convinced as any Home Rule Liberal can now profess to be, that Irish Toryism and Irish Orangeism, as they are generally understood, were great evils, that the principle of maintaining a Protestant population in Ulster, with exceptional privileges as an English garrison, was utterly indefensible in these times, and that the State Church, as representing a Protestant ascendency, and the Irish land system, as representing a territorial ascendency,

were no longer tenable. Thoroughly sympathising with the ardent views of Edmund Burke for the elevation of his Catholic fellow-countrymen in the scale of citizenship, when it was the fashion to represent him as a Tory because he differed with Fox and his followers on a matter of speculative opinion, the tendency of the French Revolution, I aspired, though in a humble spirit indeed, to promote a policy of reform in Ireland on principles which had always been recognised as Liberal.

I may be, perhaps, excused for stating that in the two volumes[1] I had written on political affairs as a very young man I had shown my appreciation of Mr. Gladstone before he had become a recognised leader of the Liberal party. Year by year my admiration increased of his many resplendent qualities, his marvellous intellectual skill, his elevated tone, combining the highest morality with the most acute intellectual subtilty, his untiring industry, his impassioned earnestness, and his many and versatile accomplishments. Kindness shown to myself converted what was at first a mere political attachment into something of personal devotion. It was always delightful to me even in a very small and retiring way to co-operate with a statesman who had more than any other living at that time my sympathies, and whom I

[1] See the *Right Hon. Benjamin Disraeli, M.P.:* A political biography addressed to the new generation. London: Richard Bentley, 1854; and *Thirty Years of Foreign Policy*, A History of the Secretaryship of the Earl of Aberdeen and Viscount Palmerston. Longmans and Co., 1855.

so fully respected, until with increasing years respect deepened into veneration. Even now I cannot refer to my feelings towards the Mr. Gladstone of that time, I cannot write his name without finding what might then be characterised as youthful enthusiasm all revived. It is on my pen. It is in my heart.

By a coincidence as I was about to proceed on this journalistic mission to Ireland, Mr. Gladstone had become the leader of the Liberal party in the House of Commons. Lord Palmerston had died soon after the General Election. Lord Russell as Lord Palmerston's successor became again Prime Minister, and Mr. Gladstone, who was Chancellor of the Exchequer, the ministerial leader in the great representative assembly. Though the Cabinet virtually remained what it had been, and though the General Election had taken place under the influence of Lord Palmerston's great name, it required little foresight to recognise that something more than a change in the head of the Government had occurred.

I was going to Ireland and to Ulster at a remarkable time. The Fenian organisation was believed to be growing in strength. Mr. James Stephens was represented, and indeed represented himself, as the head of a great conspiracy which involved the whole country in a network, and which was supposed to be ready when the signal should be given to appeal openly to arms. Ireland was not thought to be the most agreeable country for an Englishman, devoted to the peace and the unity of the kingdom and the empire, to enter upon the duties of a public instructor.

Five years before, indeed, when my predecessor in the same journalistic enterprise, Mr. F. H. Hill, went to Belfast, a friend, as I was afterwards informed, presented him in a spirit of commiseration with a revolver. It was thought to be the most suitable gift for one going to be an Irish editor.

Since that time the country could scarcely be said to have in all respects improved. The termination of the war between the Northern and Southern States of the great Republic had let loose a number of restless spirits who had acquired military training and habits of adventure during the four years the American civil contest may be said to have continued, and some of those who had taken a part in defence of the union of the North American States were eager to do what they could to bring about a disruption of the United Kingdom by force of arms.

Thus, on the last day of January, 1866, when I crossed over by the mail packet, the *Connaught*, from Holyhead to Kingstown, there were many elements of uncertainty in the immediate political future. The public mind had been deeply moved by the high-handed proceedings of Governor Eyre in Jamaica. The loss of the Australian steamer *London*, with the tragedian G. V. Brooke, was the subject of conversation among the passengers who watched the Irish mail steamer ploughing her way in the direction of the high hill of Howth, which gradually rose like a dark cloud from the waves. On arriving at the Westland Row Station in Dublin, I found that there was no train in conjunction with the Irish mail going

that evening direct from Dublin to Belfast and the North of Ireland. This shortcoming has since been somewhat tardily remedied. It was my first experience of the Irish railway organisation, in which the accommodation of the public has not often been so much considered as it ought to be. In this respect during the last quarter of a century there has been some improvement; but there is still much that is desirable to be done. At that time, there were three separate companies working the line between Dublin and Belfast. The next morning as I made the journey between what may now be considered the two Irish capitals, I was astonished at the number of times passengers were asked to show their tickets. The three lines have now been amalgamated into what is called the Great Northern Railway; but until recently it could scarcely be said that either the travelling public or the shareholders reaped all the benefit of this amalgamation.

The air was bitterly cold and the snow was lying in drifts upon the ground. But the sun was shining brightly on that morning of the 1st of February, and as the train sped northward the landscape gradually improved. It began to show signs of energetic industry, of busy and prosperous life such as are painfully wanting amid the much more romantic scenery of the South and West. Linen was bleaching, rivalling the snow heaps in whiteness, and contrasting with the bright green of the fields. Mill after mill was passed. As we came nearer and nearer Belfast the indications of work and progress increased.

The train stopped for five minutes at Portadown. "Ah!" said a tall and solemn clergyman who had entered, "there was bad work here. Have you ever read Fox's *Book of Martyrs?*" I intimated that I had glanced over the work, but had not read it.

"Every Protestant ought to read it," was the sententious reply.

"How do you know that I am a Protestant?"

"I did not say you were," said my companion laughing, "all I said was that every Protestant ought to read Fox's *Book of Martyrs.*"

"Perhaps I may not agree with you. It may be as well not to keep alive memories of evil deeds, when they foster religious animosities."

"Ah, I see, you are a Liberal. I am not ashamed to say that I am a Conservative and even an Orangeman."

"There are many Orangemen in the North of Ireland?"

"Yes, the bone and sinew of the people, sir."

"You are a gentleman of strong convictions."

"Very: we have strong convictions in the North of Ireland."

There was a pause of some ten minutes' duration. My companion then again suddenly addressed me:

"You seem a stranger here?"

"I am."

"Are you interested in the education controversy?"

"As it applies to the North of Ireland?"

"Of course as it applies to the North of Ireland."

"I have always understood that the national system worked very well on a non-sectarian basis."

"You have always understood so, have you, sir? You have been entirely misinformed. The Irish national system has never worked very well. How could it? It is an abnegation of God."

"I thought religion was allowed to be taught at certain hours and under certain restrictions in the national schools——"

"Yes, sir, at certain hours and under certain restrictions; that is what I complain of, and what the members of the Church Education Society complain of. Religion ought not to be taught only at certain hours and under certain restrictions. God is everywhere. His religion ought to be taught everywhere. An open Bible, sir, or nothing. But," said my companion, checking himself, "I am not going to inflict upon you the speech I shall soon deliver in the Victoria Hall. Come and hear us if you like."

"I am afraid that I shall not be able. I have heard the Queen's College of Belfast well spoken of."

"I have nothing to say against the Queen's College. I cannot say that I approve altogether of the system, but the Roman Catholic Bishops have condemned the Queen's University, and therefore I suppose there must be some good in it."

"They say what you say of the national schools, that the education given in the Queen's Colleges is godless."

"Then I suppose it may not be so godless after all." The reverend gentleman laughed, and added, "If you stay in Belfast for any time, you will hear a good deal about the education question. The Irish General Assembly is about to meet to discuss the question with especial reference to the threatened changes by a Government acting as the tools of the Romanist Bishops."

In passing Lurgan there were several fine bleaching greens glistening in the morning sun. "This town," said my clerical companion, "was all but destroyed in the rebellion of 1641. That was a frightful time. It showed what Popery can do."

"But," I ventured to state, "Edmund Burke always maintained that the rebellion of 1641 had been provoked by almost unbearable tyranny."

"Oh, did he?" replied my reverend friend: "Well, he knew nothing at all on the subject." Then after a pause he added, "I am sorry to say that the present Lord Lurgan is a Liberal. So is Lord Dufferin, who ought to know better. It is a pity." We left Moira behind and soon afterwards approached Lisburn.

"This town too," said my fellow passenger, "was destroyed in the rebellion of 1641. The Huguenots who were driven out of France when the Edict of Nantes was revoked did much for the linen trade of Lisburn. You can yet see the tombstones of these Huguenots who were obliged to leave their native country. This will show you what the Roman Catholics are."

"It seems to me that in Ireland you have good memories."

"Yes, sir, we have. We forget nothing."

"Would it not be better sometimes to forget?"

"Not at all under such circumstances. Macaulay says: 'A people which takes no pride in the achievements of remote ancestors will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered by remote descendants.' I have often quoted the sentence at our Twelfth of July meetings."

"But Macaulay was a Liberal, and I think he added some qualifying words."

"Such qualifications are of little consequence, but here we are in Belfast."

The train was now slowing, and steaming into a somewhat dingy station. "Good-bye, sir," said my clerical informant, descending from the carriage, "I hope we shall meet again."

"Thanks, good-bye."

CHAPTER II

1866

Belfast as it was and is—Sir Walter Scott's visit—"Belfast like Glasgo, maun"—The valuation and harbour receipts—The linen industry—The effect of the American War on Ulster—The Unitarians—The "Northern Whig Club"—The Presbyterians and the Union—Lord Charlemont—O'Connell and the *Northern Whig*—"Never Green and never Orange"—Dr. Drennan, the poet of the *United Irishman*—Rebellion of '98.—Dr. Cooke—Regium Donum—Lord Cairns—A General Election—Position of the Ulster Liberals.

DURING the visit Sir Walter Scott paid to Ireland in the summer of 1825, Mr. Lockhart wrote to his wife: "Belfast is a thriving, bustling place, surrounded with smart villas, much like a second-rate English town."[1] Since that time the town had steadily increased in population, wealth, and industry. I had passed through it on an excursion a few years before, and was then struck with the contrast it afforded to most of the Irish cities I had seen. The handsome square in which the White Linen Hall is situated, Donegall Place, and High Street gave a very pleasing impression. The villas on both sides of the Lough, which has been compared, though perhaps not quite accurately, with the Lake of Geneva, and the

[1] *Life of Scott*, Edit. 1871, p. 557.

promenade on the bank of the harbour by the side of the Queen's Island, which has since been covered with extensive shipbuilding yards, could not but please a stranger. During the forty-one years which had gone since Sir Walter Scott's visit, Belfast had become less of an Irish town, and more and more an English one. It could not now justly be considered to resemble a second-rate English town. It will bear favourable comparison with some first-rate English towns. For a great manufacturing centre it is singularly free from smoke, and has nothing of the depressing character of most large manufacturing places in Great Britain. Though its situation is low, it has to its left large hills which rise to the dignity of mountains, and across a river to the right is the undulating County of Down, which is far from being deficient in picturesqueness. Times have changed since Schomberg rode out of Belfast to meet King William at the White House, which was the solitary one between the then small town—almost a village—of Belfast and the larger Carrickfergus, with its Castle, which has seen such remarkable vicissitudes.

Round the White House there are many flourishing villas; the whole way indeed between Belfast and Carrickfergus is studded with villages and pleasant dwellings.

To people who knew the manufacturing towns of what is called the Black Country, and even of Lancashire, not excepting in some respects Liverpool and Manchester, the first appearance of

Belfast a quarter of a century ago was more than prepossessing. It was in some degree a surprise. In more recent years, as the town, now a city, has extended, Royal Avenue has been made, through what was a very wretched district of old houses, and nearly every house and shop in High Street have been rebuilt without much regularity, but in a gay and even fantastic style, of which the effect is agreeable. Scottish excursionists come over on their holidays in large numbers to Belfast, and especially from Glasgow. In the early morning hours when the steamboats arrive, I have often witnessed the astonishment of some of these visitors as they first entered High Street from the quay. "Belfast is very much like Glasgo, maun," I have often heard said, as well as in some instances the rejoinder, "I think it looks finer."

At the census taken in 1841 the population numbered seventy thousand, and twenty years later a hundred and twenty thousand. It is now nearly three hundred thousand without including the large number of inhabitants outside the city boundaries, which have not been recently extended as they are soon to be. Belfast is in fact very much like what Manchester, Liverpool, and Glasgow were in the year 1848, when Macaulay published the first two volumes of his history and dwelt with so much satisfaction on the astounding progress of the large British towns independently of London.

The valuation, which for years was steadily gaining upon that of Dublin, has now surpassed it. Belfast

can boast of having the premier valuation in Ireland. It has increased by three hundred thousand pounds during a quarter of a century. Some two thousand five hundred new houses are now built every year. The sum collected by the Customs Department in 1892 amounted to more than two millions and a quarter. This is a larger return than not only any other Irish port can show, but more than any other port of the United Kingdom, except Liverpool and London. The Customs and Inland Revenue Departments together collected in the same year three millions two hundred and fifty thousand pounds. This fact requires to be thoroughly understood.

At the time I made my acquaintanceship with Belfast, the linen trade showed signs of depression. That trade, regarded as the staple trade of commercial and manufacturing Ulster, had been excessively stimulated during the war between the Northern and Southern States of the American Union, when the cotton mills of Lancashire were unable to procure to any satisfactory extent the raw material of their industry. Merchants and tradesmen with capital at their command in this emergency threw themselves into the linen business. New mills were erected to meet the enormous demand for linen goods when cotton could not be procured, and Belfast advanced in prosperity at a rapidly increasing ratio. With, however, the return of peace between the Northern and Southern States of North America, the cotton industry revived, and as a consequence the demand for linen decreased. The Ulster mills were

then thought to be too numerous for the ordinary demand. Many of them were turned into limited liability companies. All of them for a long time suffered from over-production.

It was the custom to say, "We have all our eggs in one basket." In recent years these words are no longer applicable. Linen is not the only product of Ulster generally, nor of Belfast particularly. The energy and enterprise of the merchants and manufacturers have found other spheres of activity. The growing prosperity of Belfast is now established on a sounder, because a broader basis, than when it was thought to depend almost exclusively on the linen trade.

The American war, which had given so gigantic a stimulus to the staple manufacturing industry of Belfast and the North of Ireland generally, had not done much for the prosperity of the *Northern Whig* newspaper, of which I now became the editor. It is no reflection on my editorial predecessors to say that the journal as I found it was not generally popular, even with some of those who professed to concur with the Liberal principles which it had always maintained. Much to its credit it had steadily supported the Northern States against their slave-holding rivals. But this policy, though involving the steady maintenance of the Union, and regarding a possible disruption as the greatest of national calamities, was not generally approved of by the Liberals of the North of Ireland, while the Conservatives were to a man enthusiastically on the side of

the South. The *Spectator* had about this time to confess that it had lost more money than it liked to think of in its championship of the Northern States. The *Northern Whig* in some degree suffered for a time in Ulster from a similar devotion to principle.

Circumstances, too, had given apparent reason to its political opponents to represent the newspaper as not very favourable to the religious views of either the members of the State Church, struggling against disestablishment, or of the orthodox Presbyterians, who notwithstanding the influence of the aged Dr. Cooke, broken down in health, and the shadow of his former self, were in a much larger proportion favourable to a Liberal policy. It had not been so conciliatory as it might have been to the religious convictions of the great majority of the people among whom it circulated. The founder of the paper was Francis D. Finlay, a Unitarian; his son and successor in the then single proprietorship was a Unitarian; the Unitarians generally were among its supporters.

The Unitarians in the North of Ireland, after having been driven out of the orthodox Presbyterian fold, had an independent Church, still however, retaining a Presbytery and a Synod according to the Presbyterian form of Church government. In Belfast, and indeed throughout Ulster, the Unitarians were an eminently respectable, cultivated, and Liberal people. That they were supporters of the *Northern Whig* was not, however, a recommendation to many orthodox Presbyterians who regarded its political principles and its consistent independence with

approval. Before Mr. F. H. Hill was its very able editor, the chair had for a time been occupied by Mr. E. Whitty, who had been the author of "The Stranger in the Gallery," a series of papers which as contributed to the *Leader* newspaper, now defunct, may be considered to have been the beginning of what has been called the new journalism.

Mr. Whitty, who went out to Australia, and who died there shortly after I entered on my editorial duties, was an extremely clever writer. He had been from his early youth trained to journalism and was thoroughly acquainted with all its various departments. I fear, however, that some of his contributions, written with very little respect for the earnest convictions of the God-fearing Ulster people, had a great deal to do with giving to the paper an irreligious character, which, when it was once acquired, was very difficult to alter. Even some time after I had become editor, it was not unusual for the Conservative local morning newspaper as a matter of course to refer to its Liberal opponent as "our infidel contemporary." Such was one of the amenities of Belfast journalism, which Mr. Thackeray many years before had humorously referred to in his *Irish Sketch Book*.

The *Northern Whig* had been established in the year 1825. It then expressed to a great degree the convictions held at the time and long afterwards by the sons and grandsons of many who had taken part in the rebellion of '98, and who were called United Irishmen. As the late Rev. Joseph Galbraith, of

Trinity College, himself a Nationalist, said to me, "The *Northern Whig* newspaper may be considered to have taken its name from a Northern Whig Club, existing in Belfast during the last decade of the eighteenth century." That club, as its name implied, was Whig; but its members were somewhat advanced politicians. Many of them were subsequently United Irishmen. With Tone and men like Tone, they became more than merely reformers.

This Northern Whig Club was first established in the year 1790. The members wore a blue uniform, blue cuffs, and capes of blue velvet, and gilt buttons, on which was the motto "Persevere." Among them were Lord Charlemont, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, and other distinguished Ulstermen, who had been more or less connected with the Volunteer movement. Their first resolutions were in favour of Reform, but with the setting up of the French Republic some of the members became very prominent revolutionists. In 1794, when the armies of the French Republicans were being victorious over the monarchical coalition, the Northern Whig Club passed a resolution in hearty sympathy with the French against the Allies. The more moderate members retired; others became United Irishmen and had undoubtedly treasonable views.

Hence years before the Irish Rebellion broke out they were called by Burke the Irish Jacobins. Members of the club took Burke's words as a compliment, and publicly declared that they were the Irish Jacobins. I have never been able to find that the Presbyterians

in the North of Ireland, and others who might be considered either United Irishmen or sympathisers with them, entertained what are now called Irish National views. The descendants of these men ought to know what political convictions their fathers and grandfathers held on the great Irish question of the time. They one and all told me that their ancestors at the end of the last century were not Irish Nationalists, but that the most advanced of them contemplated setting up a cosmopolitan republic based on the principles enunciated in Paine's *Rights of Man.*

The spirit in fact of Thomas Paine may be traced in the early numbers of the *Northern Whig* newspaper. It may be seen in a will of the original owner and founder of that newspaper. He expressed the hope that the journal would always remain consistently in the advocacy of the Rights of Man, and that, if ever the principles of the paper should be changed, its name should at the same time be altered.

Irish Nationalists, as they are now known, the United Irishmen could scarcely be. At that time Ireland had a native parliament, though an exclusively Protestant one. It has been said, and not altogether without some foundation in truth, that many of the Presbyterians of Belfast were in favour of the Union until they found that it might lead, as it ought to have led at the time, to immediate Catholic Emancipation. Lord Charlemont, the leader of the Volunteers many years

earlier, though considered one of the most Liberal and patriotic of Irish noblemen, never, as well-informed readers scarcely require to be told, was in favour of the absolute removal of the Catholic disabilities.[1]

The *Northern Whig* was from the first a warm advocate of the removal of these disabilities. For very many years, writing from a Protestant standpoint, it fought the battle of the Catholics against the Orangemen, as no Catholic or Nationalist journal published in Ulster could have done. Of all the Irish newspapers it was regarded as the most determined opponent of Orangeism. It was constantly denounced on Orange platforms and in Oranges lodges. When Lord John Russell brought in his Ecclesiastical Titles Bill, the *Northern Whig*, almost alone among Irish Protestant newspapers, opposed that ill-starred measure. It suffered for its adherence to the broad principles of religious equality by losing temporarily nearly half its subscribers, at a time when subscribers really counted.

But it was never in favour of the Repeal of the Union. The original proprietor was, during that agitation, on friendly terms with O'Connell; but the great Irish agitator found himself as much opposed by the *Northern Whig* and the Ulster Liberals generally as Mr. Parnell and the present Irish Nationalists have since been. O'Connell on one

[1] Hardy's *Memoirs of Lord Charlemont passim*, and the recently published *Memoirs and Correspondence of James, First Earl of Charlemont*, vol. ii., pp. 19 and 118.

occasion publicly stigmatised the newspaper as "Green with the Orange Tail."

It was never Green and never Orange. At a time when Lawless—Jack Lawless as his friends called him—was editing the *Irishman* in Belfast, he wrote a letter to the Repeal Association complaining of the terms in which the Liberator had spoken of the local politicians. O'Connell, so far from expressing his regret at what he had done, publicly repeated his offence, and associated with it the Ulster Liberal newspaper. He said, "The *Northern Whig* appears to me a fair specimen of the hypocrisy of political principles in Belfast; they invoke the name of liberty while they assail the ardent friend of freedom. They affect a generous sympathy with the oppressed, while they are as stout and persevering calumniators as the best trained dealers in virulent falsehood to be found in the entire Orange gang."[1]

Dr. Drennan, who might be regarded as the poet of the United Irishmen, lived near Belfast. The study in which he wrote is still pointed out in the grounds of a solicitor, Mr. Dinnen, at Cabin Hill, three miles from the town, in the county of Down. Not long ago a number of Nationalists, who visited Belfast, thought of paying a visit to Dr. Drennan's tomb; but his son, who recently died, pointed out that his father had in 1818 made a remarkable speech in favour of Parliamentary reform. In that address the poet of the old United Irishmen stated that, with Parliament-

[1] *O'Connell's Select Speeches*, edited by his son, vol. ii., p. 450.

ary reform and other recognised Liberal reforms granted, he would be quite satisfied. His son was also always a reformer, and a Liberal, and, when he died, a decided Liberal Unionist having no sympathy with the present race of Irish Nationalists. The *Northern Whig* was and has always remained devoted to Liberal principles as they were professed by all the leaders and followers of the Liberal party until Mr. Gladstone made his great change. Dr. Dorrian, who had succeeded the more conciliatory Dr. Denver in the Catholic bishopric of Down and Connor, and who was thus Catholic Bishop of Belfast when I first knew the town, was an uncompromising Nationalist. He had very little sympathy with the Protestant Liberals, but when I made his acquaintance soon after I became the editor of the newspaper, he had the candour to say to me: "The *Whig* was never Orange."

These references at the beginning of my Ulster experiences to a newspaper with which I have had such a long connection will not, I hope, be deemed either merely journalistic or egotistical. They are necessary to make the position of the Ulster Liberals, and the journal which in an independent spirit represented them, clear at the beginning of a political narrative extending over more than a quarter of a century.

The Protestant Liberals of Ulster, whose fathers and grandfathers were United Irishmen, had generally become warm supporters of the Liberal party as it had been led by Charles Earl Grey, Lord Melbourne, Lord

John Russell, and recently by Lord Palmerston. Though the descendants of the United Irishmen, they were not at all disposed themselves to become rebels; but they were rather proud than otherwise of their ancestors for having been rebels. The events of that time, two years before the Act of Union, were vividly present to the descendants of those who had suffered in that dreadful insurrection, or rather series of insurrections. The wounds, though healed, left scars still visible. The scenes of the battles, as at Ballynahinch, and of the executions, as of McCracken in Belfast, were still pointed out. The High Street, then mean and small, and with a river running through it, was the theatre of McCracken's execution and several similar tragedies. The grandson of the Rev. Mr. Porter, a Presbyterian clergyman, hanged by the ruling powers, was a merchant, an Ulster Liberal of great intelligence and ability. At a dinner this gentleman gave, during a Christmas visit of the late Mr. Alexander Russel, for so many years the very clever and popular editor of the *Scotsman*, he said to another guest, a neighbouring country gentleman, "Your grandfather hanged my grandfather." "Dear me," said Mr. Russel, "this is coming very near."

Very near many of these anecdotes and reminiscences did come. On an Englishman to whom the horrors of civil war were altogether of a general and vaguely historical character, these directly personal and detailed associations with the terrible events of '98 had a startling effect. He appeared to feel

almost present on the scenes of blood just after a great battle was over, to see the carnage which followed the triumph of the conquerors and the sufferings of the vanquished. He felt that the Irish Rebellion just as the last century closed was a vivid reality, and not merely a tale that had been so often told by poets, historians, romance writers, and Irish rhetoricians.

It was a terrible reality. Mere cruelty for cruelty's sake was not indeed generally perpetrated, but the savage atrocities committed by the rival factions under the impulse of deadly hatred, both in the North and South of Ireland, have never had a parallel at any time in English or Scotch history. All that was done during the brief hour of Protestant Episcopal ascendency in Scotland, all that was done in the South-West of England after Monmouth's rebellion, are nothing to what was done in Ireland during and after the insurrection of 1798. It was done by both sides, but not with the sanction of the higher officials. It was done when the country had an Irish Parliament, that Grattan's Parliament to which many Irish Nationalists this day profess to look back with regret. The Protestants of Ulster, whatever might be their political opinions, never, so far as I ever heard, mentioned that Parliament with respect, nor showed the slightest desire to see it restored, even as a Protestant Parliament, as we all know it exclusively was, while it lived and until it died.

More than a quarter of a century ago, party spirit

indeed ran very high in Belfast and the neighbouring counties. The Presbyterians, who for the most part were Liberals though not Irish Nationalists when the century began, had, after Catholic Emancipation and the Reform Act of 1832, shown in considerable numbers a distrust of the Catholics : more especially was this the fact after the beginning of the Repeal movement.

The question of appropriation as raised in the session of 1834, proved that the Protestant State Church had come to be seriously menaced. At a subsequent meeting near Hillsborough Dr. Cooke, the most Conservative Presbyterian minister of his time, made a forcible speech which was still well remembered. An eminent divine Dr. Cooke could never be considered, but he was a very decided party politician. He had a handsome face. It attracted Charles Dickens's attention when he was giving one of his readings in the Ulster Hall of Belfast, and the Doctor was one of his audience. In the year 1866 Dr. Cooke's great personal influence remained, and was always used to induce the Presbyterians to make common cause with the Irish Conservatives. An energetic race of Liberals among the younger Presbyterian clergy and the more intelligent tenant farmers still earnestly opposed this reactionary spirit. It was not, however, remedied by the bait held out by another distinguished though less dignified clergyman, to counteract Dr. Cooke's influence, of an increased Regium Donum. A Conservative Government when they were approached on this

subject, showed some inclination to favour the increase; but the Ulster Liberals as a body strongly opposed it. Many of the country clergy, who were poor, and had very little to depend on but the Regium Donum, which was too small to constitute an effective endowment, but large enough to check the voluntary contributions of the people, might be excused if they did not recognise that the age of endowments for Churches at least under a united Parliament had passed, and that no Government would commit themselves to an increased Regium Donum while the Church of the Irish Catholic millions depended on the scanty contributions of the poorest part of the people.

Presbyterian deputation after Presbyterian deputation went up periodically to London to interview Ministers and other influential public men on this subject. Some members of those deputations were indiscreet enough to boast to Liberal politicians about their political influence. From Mr. Bright they met with a contemptuous reply about this political influence, when they did not return a single member to the House of Commons.

At that time they were scarcely able to return one. Notwithstanding many protestations, the Irish Presbyterian Church, though supposed to be more in sympathy with the Free Kirk of Scotland than with the Scotch Establishment, was, through the influence of Dr. Cooke and other Conservative Presbyterians, apparently following humbly in the wake of the doomed Irish State Church.

The then Sir Hugh Cairns's personal and political

influence was, of course, exerted in the same direction. He had for fourteen years represented Belfast. The Belfast Conservatives were naturally proud of such a member, who gave a dignity to the Ulster representation which, to say the truth, it has not always possessed. The admiration of "Sir Hugh" was very great. It was not shared by the second representative of the town, a Presbyterian gentleman, who had been selected as his colleague on the principle that both Churches ought to be represented. The representative function of Mr. Samuel Gibson Getty was to say ditto to Sir Hugh; as Burke's colleague in the representation of Bristol, an equally uninfluential personage, was said to have declared on their joint return that he would say ditto to his illustrious Irish colleague.

At the general election in the preceding summer, Lord John Hay, a popular naval officer, had made a gallant fight as a Liberal candidate. His supporters, however respectable, found it to be going on a forlorn hope to successfully contend against the well-established Conservative and Orange strength which had been allowed to consolidate from a time not long after the Reform Act, when Sir James Emerson Tennent's defection from the local Liberal party gave it a blow from which it seemed at the time, February, 1866, that its recovery was utterly hopeless.

Sir Hugh Cairns in the contest of the preceding year had treated Lord John Hay with very little generosity. It may be said indeed, without any intentional disrespect to Lord Cairns's memory, that

generosity to his political opponents and gratitude to his political adherents were not his special characteristics. The son of a Belfast gentleman, and a graduate of Trinity College, he had pursued a very successful career at the English bar. His legal attainments were admittedly great. His political abilities, too, were far beyond the average of successful lawyers. His supporters in Belfast mentioned with pride that on a memorable occasion Mr. Disraeli had selected Sir Hugh to reply for the Conservative Opposition, when he was himself prevented from performing this task, and that he had done it so well as to receive not only the enthusiastic plaudits of the party, but the hearty congratulations of its chief in the House of Commons.

In some respects Lord Cairns might indeed be regarded from a Conservative point of view as a typical Ulsterman. He was not only a very able lawyer but sincerely religious. He had married into a religious family, and held thoroughly Evangelical, if not even decidedly Calvinistic views. A distinguished Belfast clergyman was shocked at Lord Cairns's encouragement of lay preachers. At this time he was about forty-six years of age, and might be considered in the prime of life, with a great judicial and even political career before him; but even then his tall figure seemed to have a stoop, and his face was pale. It was whispered that his health was not good, and that he could only work five days in the week. As a politician in Belfast he was a tower of strength to the Conservatives. The tide

was all flowing against the Belfast and Ulster Liberals. Though they were generally supported by the Catholics, they had no representation in the House of Commons. With Dr. Cooke on the Presbyterian, and Sir Hugh Cairns on the Protestant Episcopal side, acting in a thoroughly sectarian spirit against them, the Belfast, and indeed all the Ulster Liberals, seemed utterly cowed. To an Englishman with strong Liberal sympathies, the change from London to the capital of Ulster appeared a strange retrogression. It was like going back to another age, to a former generation. The dominant party in Belfast seemed to think as children, and to speak as children. With this political backwardness there was also an intolerance of their opponents displayed both in their newspapers and on their platforms surprising to any one who had been accustomed to the more moderate political atmosphere of England.

CHAPTER III

1866

The Belfast Town Council—A Chancery suit—The Catholics—The Riots—The Party Processions Act—"Forty shillings and costs"—Bitter sectarian spirit—Election of 1865—Non-sectarian education—Meeting of the Irish General Assembly—The establishment of the Queen's Colleges and University—The character of the Queen's University graduates.

SUCH was Belfast as it then appeared to an English observer. The Conservatives, depending more or less on an Orange organisation, were not only the majority but even practically the whole Town Council.

The Protestant Liberals greatly distrusted this Town Council. The Catholics execrated it as returned by their Orange opponents. Even the Conservative managers had recently acknowledged the anomalous position of a municipality which professed to represent all the ratepayers, and in which only one party was virtually represented. There was, indeed, a Catholic Town Councillor, but he called himself a Conservative, and was returned by the Conservatives and Orangemen. He professed to be connected with them politically, and spoke of the Conservatives as "my party."

A little time previously an arrangement had been made to elect some highly respectable Liberals to the Town Council by the forbearance of the Conservatives. But those gentlemen soon found that they were not intended to act independently, but to do as the Conservative managers wished. They therefore one after another had retired. The experiment had failed. The wife of one of the most accomplished of these Liberals, who had allowed himself to enter the Town Council under the Conservative nomination, said to me with reference to this subject, "I never was ashamed of my husband until he became a Town Councillor."

A Chancery suit which had only recently been settled by the kind offices of the Irish Attorney-General, Mr., afterwards Lord Fitzgerald, had shown the bitterness of the partisan spirit between excluded Liberals from the Town Council and the dominant Conservative majority. It is not necessary to enter on that much debated and complicated question, which for a time delayed many improvements urgently required in a growing and prosperous town, but which had ultimately a purifying effect. The Town Council were all the better for the Chancery suit, though several of the more prominent members, both in pocket and health, were much the worse. Conservative admirers of Lord Cairns afterwards often regretfully remarked that, though as Sir Hugh he then represented the town and was so eminent a lawyer, he gave them no advice nor assistance of any kind in the persecution to which they represented

themselves as having been recently exposed by the Chancery suit. While this almost savage litigation was going on, Lord Cairns stood coldly and cautiously aloof. The gentleman who first suggested the rising Chancery lawyer, young Cairns as he called him, as a fit and proper person to represent his native town, and who himself was deeply interested in the Chancery suit, said in a moment of candour, "I again and again tried to approach Cairns on the suit, and to have his advice, but I could never get him to say anything about it; he would do nothing for us, and always turned away from the subject."

But with all his caution and reserve Lord Cairns was a politician after the hearts of the Belfast Conservatives. If he made use of them, he gave to Ulster Conservatism and Belfast an influential position.

The riots of two years before, 1864, had shown how fierce the party warfare was between the lower classes of those who were called Orangemen, though many of them were not enrolled in the Orange ranks, and the Catholics, who were increasing in numbers, through the large extension of the linen trade during the American war, and the progress of other industries then struggling into existence. Those industries, principally established by Protestants, were giving remunerative employment to the Catholic working classes beyond what they had any prospect of attaining in the mountainous districts of Ulster, into which many of their ancestors had formerly been driven. With their increasing numbers there was increasing confidence of the Catholics in their

strength. They were therefore less inclined to submit to that spirit of ascendency which was ready enough to manifest itself among the Protestant artisans, who regarded the new comers as intruders and rebels, included in the one comprehensive term "the Papishes."

The growth of the large shipbuilding firm of Messrs. Harland and Wolff, though then comparatively in its infancy, had considerably increased the number of Protestant artisans. The shipwrights generally came from the Clyde, the Wear, or the Tyne. There were no Catholic shipwrights anywhere. None of them had ever been trained to the trade, but in the rougher work, as excavators and ordinary labourers, a certain number of Catholics were employed. The two sectarian classes were never very harmonious. Proximity in the same occupation, and even in the same quarter of the town, where they dwelt as in two hostile camps, intensified their mutual distrust, dislike, or it may even be said hatred.

The riots at that time have been attributed to various causes. A popular Presbyterian clergyman, who set himself, as he boasted, to assert the right of delivering open air religious discourses in the public thoroughfares, and particularly on the steps of the Post Office, was often blamed by the Catholics, and by many of the Liberal Protestants, as the principal author of the disturbances. Some of the clergymen, Protestant Episcopal, and Presbyterian, who were more or less associated with Orangeism, could indeed,

if judged by the style of their addresses, whether political or religious, scarcely be justly characterised as ministers of peace. But the most direct cause of these first riots, to which the London newspapers sent their correspondents as to a seat of war, was the proceeding of the Catholics in going by their bands and contingents from Belfast to march in the procession in Dublin, when the foundation stone of the O'Connell monument was laid, though several years had to elapse before the statue itself was placed on its base.

It was a new thing for the Catholics of Belfast openly, and perhaps somewhat defiantly, to assert themselves by showing their sympathy with their co-religionists in Dublin in the face of the Orange population of the Northern capital. The Act prohibiting party processions, a strong Coercion Act of its kind, was on the Statute Book. It was, too, very rigorously enforced against the processions of Orangemen in Ulster generally and in the streets of Belfast, while it was not applied to Nationalist and even Fenian processions in Dublin and the Southern cities. The Orange population saw with indignation that even the Catholics of Belfast could send bands to play and march in procession at a celebration in honour of O'Connell's memory in Dublin, while they who regarded themselves as a more loyal and respectable people were not permitted to march in procession in Belfast, or anywhere in Ulster, during the great Protestant commemorations. This imputation of unfairness in the administration of the law was at

the root of much of the bitterness with which the Belfast Catholic bandsmen and processionists were regarded. The beginning of the riots may be said to have been when the bandsmen returned in their green uniforms to their homes in the immediate vicinity of the great Orange district of Sandy Row, which is only separated from the Catholic district of the Pound by the railway bridge called the Boyne.

The strong sectarian spirit then pervading the population showed itself in various ways. The lower classes among the Protestant populace delighted in publicly cursing the Pope; the lower classes among the Catholics were equally ready to loudly anathematise King William the Third, the Deliverer, of Pious and Immortal Memory. Such utterances in the streets, as may be easily understood, were not conducive to the peace of the town nor of the neighbouring counties. They caused serious disturbances, which without the prompt action of the police might easily have led to a renewal of the riots. A local statute, or bye-law, was passed giving the magistrates power to inflict a fine of forty shillings and costs, or a term of imprisonment, on every one who might use sectarian language of a provocative character in the public thoroughfares. Immediately after the riots such offences were almost daily and nightly incidents. "Forty shillings and costs" were words which had a somewhat ludicrous significance in Belfast. To a stranger they at first seemed unmeaning and perplexing. While the

extreme party passions were at their highest, many zealous Protestants of the better classes were not ashamed to subscribe to a fund for the payment of the fines inflicted for using these defiant expressions by their fellow-religionists, though they saw with much equanimity the poorer Catholics, who had not such wealthy sympathisers, sent to jail for similar sectarian and political provocations.

When a zealous Protestant or a zealous Catholic working man became drunk, his habitual impulse was to commit the offence which he knew would render him liable to a not inconsiderable fine or weeks of imprisonment. As often happens, the prohibition was accepted as a defiance.

Very soon after my arrival in Belfast, I was returning one Saturday evening from a visit over the Queen's Bridge. A couple, evidently a man and his wife, of the artisan class were just in front. He was drunk and occasionally staggered. The woman was in a state of alarm, again and again clinging to him impulsively, and imploringly exclaiming, "Oh, John, don't do it!"

His reply was, "I must."

"No, John, don't! For God's sake, don't!"

"I must, I must; I can't help it," said the husband.

"Oh, don't, don't!" was the almost despairing rejoinder from his better half.

I thought that the man was about to attempt to commit suicide by throwing himself over the bridge. Suddenly he shouted "To hell——!" and then looked round. Again he shouted "To hell ——!" but the

remaining words, "with the Pope," died away half uttered on his lips as he beheld two policemen just coming upon the bridge.

Wretched women were, when in a similar state of intoxication, as ready as the men to run the risk of fine and imprisonment for the pleasure of cursing a Protestant King who had lain more than a century and a half in his grave, or a Pope to whom such curses could never do the least harm, nor even be known to him in the old Imperial City on the Seven Hills.

Near Belfast, but in the county of Down, a somewhat officious inspector found fault with a farmer for having his name on his cart in ordinary writing letters. "My man," he said, "you must know that these letters are very difficult to read; you should have had the name painted in Roman letters." The tenant farmer took the rebuke with the usual dogged sullenness until the word "Roman" was pronounced. As a zealous Protestant he then felt himself insulted, and turning round on the county official exclaimed, with his eyes in a fine frenzy rolling, "To hell with the Pope!"

Another illustration may be given of the spirit then pervading the country. At a party riot a man received a severe blow which literally knocked a hole in his skull; his brother, who owed some money to a Belfast medical man, asked him to come out and see his wife, who was ailing. The doctor went. Having examined the lady, he was requested "just to give a look at Jim in the yard." There was Jim, somewhat

pale, but with a patch of brown paper stuck on the hole in the skull, walking about doing his work as if such a wound in his head was a matter of no consequence. The plaster put on the place had come off, and with it had come out a piece of bone. Had the plaster remained the result might have been very serious. The simple piece of brown paper, under which the brain might be seen throbbing, probably saved the man's life.

Many of the clergy were doubtless much to blame for the bad spirit thus instilled into the minds of large numbers of the poorer and more ignorant classes. The chaplains of the Orange lodges, both Episcopalian and Presbyterian, with many Protestant divines—if we are so to call them—who were not Orange chaplains, nor even enrolled members of the Orange Association, denounced every concession made to the Catholics, and systematically misrepresented the conciliatory policy of Liberal Governments. To Conservative Ministries they were more indulgent; but I am sorry to say that from many of their pulpits the accents of peace and brotherly love to the Catholics, who were fellow-subjects and fellow-Christians, were not heard so often as they might have been.

I was soon struck with the bitter sectarian spirit which came from the pulpits of many of the clergy of the then Established Church. Those clergy were the reverse of conciliatory to the Catholic population. Even some of the most eminent Protestant laymen seemed to have the same strong sectarian prejudices. It

would be difficult to show from the speeches of so distinguished a representative for Belfast as the first Lord Cairns was, that he ever had the least kindly feeling to his Catholic fellow-countrymen. If he did not hate them, he was certainly above the hypocrisy of ever professing to love them. But the clergy were, of course, more outspoken. They thought themselves, as members of the threatened State Church, to be in danger of losing their privileged position, if not their emoluments. They felt themselves on the defensive, but even their defence partook of the character of defiance.

At last I was fortunate enough to find a Protestant clergyman who avoided the too habitual "No Popery" denunciations. This gentleman, to whom I had expressed my regret at what I had so often heard from Protestant Episcopal pulpits, said, "Oh, we have nothing of that sort of thing with us." This was the Rev. Thomas Welland, of the new church of St. Thomas. He has recently been chosen bishop of the diocese. At the funeral of a friend, Mr. Welland asked me to introduce him to the Rev. John Macnaughtan, then seventy years of age, a strong Liberal of the Scotch Presbyterian type, who had taken in Scotland an active part in the Disruption, and who afterwards in the Irish General Assembly was regarded as the ablest Liberal opponent of the somewhat overbearing Dr. Cooke. To this able controversialist I introduced my friend in the following terms: "Mr. Macnaughtan, allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Welland, a clergyman under

whom I have sat for some time, and whom I have never heard denouncing the Pope." The words had scarcely fallen from my lips when I remembered that the Rev. Mr. Macnaughtan, though so decided a Liberal, spoke habitually in no complimentary terms of the Holy Father. He started as though he were shot. "But he ought to say something against the Pope, then," was Mr. Macnaughtan's reply. What I had intended as a compliment to my Protestant Episcopal clergyman, who, I believe, was a Conservative, was received by the very able Presbyterian clergyman, the pronounced Liberal, as a reproach.

At the electoral contest in Belfast during the preceding summer, when Lord Palmerston had dissolved the Parliament, the Rev. Mr. Macnaughtan had ardently supported the Liberal candidate, Lord John Hay, against the coalesced Conservatives, Sir Hugh Cairns and Mr. Samuel Gibson Getty. A sentence of one of Mr. Macnaughtan's speeches I heard often quoted. It was, "Show me a Scotch constituency where a Conservative candidate dares show his face." Scotch Presbyterian Liberals were then thought to be Liberals in everything else but in showing any sympathy with the Irish Catholics and the Pope. It did not occur to Mr. Macnaughtan, it did not occur to any of the Ulster Liberals, that the time would ever come when a policy of setting up an Irish Parliament and Executive, in which the Catholics would inevitably have an enormously preponderant power in the representation and in the administration, would be supported by many Scotch

Liberals, by many Scotch Presbyterians, in defiance of the almost unanimous protests of their Presbyterian kinsmen in Ulster, whose forefathers had been induced to settle there and to carry out a work of colonisation and civilisation on the faith of the English Government.

One of the first political manifestations I beheld in Belfast was at a special meeting of the Irish General Assembly summoned early in the year of my arrival to consider the Irish University question. Sir George Grey, as Lord Palmerston's Home Secretary, had, at the close of the previous session of Parliament, made some promise that the Government would undertake to consider the grievances of the Catholics, who could not obtain degrees except by passing through the non-sectarian portals of the Queen's Colleges, against which their bishops had declared war as perilous to their faith. Lord Palmerston's Government had come to an end with his death. Sir George Grey was, however, still Home Secretary, and it was generally understood that the promise he had given was still binding on the new administration composed of so many old colleagues. Articles in the newspapers and periodicals appeared on this question, which can scarcely yet be considered as settled. The special meeting of the Irish General Assembly was summoned to consider the business, which was believed to be most urgent. The ablest speaker on the non-sectarian, as opposed to the denominational, side, was the Rev. John Macnaughtan just mentioned. He was supported

by many other clergymen, who were also Liberals, and who thought that they were maintaining the cause of civil and religious liberty against ecclesiastical encroachments. The debating in this clerical assembly, or reverend court as it was called, was quite as animated as discussions in the House of Commons then were, and a great deal more personal. The free speaking, the jest, the retort, the sarcasm, perhaps not always so polished as might have been desirable, surprised one unaccustomed to such exhibitions especially on the part of clergymen. Presbyterianism has often been called a republican religion. Freedom and equality undoubtedly asserted themselves on the floor of the General Assembly. The great body of the ministers, some six hundred in number, less even than the elders who formed part of the meeting, were not much respecters of persons. Each spoke the thing he would, and in the style he would.

This question as it was then discussed has an historical interest. The object of the five resolutions, come to after three days' debate, was to prevent an affiliation scheme of denominational colleges with the professedly non-sectarian Queen's University. Many of the members of the Irish General Assembly who supported the resolutions against affiliation did not foresee that a time would come when a Conservative Government would take the lead in destroying the Queen's University, and that one of the advisers of this great change would be Lord Cairns. On the other hand, the British Liberals were then professedly

non-sectarian in their educational principles. They were little disposed to approve of concessions from a denominational point of view, either to the Church of England in England, or to the Church of Rome in Ireland.

Mr. Stanley, as a Liberal Irish Chief Secretary, afterwards the Earl of Derby, and three times Conservative Prime Minister, was ministerially responsible for the establishment of the National system of education in the primary schools. Its leading principle was non-sectarian. The schools thus set up, virtually almost at the whole expense of the State, were to receive their grants for teaching in which all the Irish people might concur. The children were, irrespective of creed, to sit on the same benches, and to receive the same instruction on ordinary secular matters. Religion was regarded as a thing apart, to be taught at certain specified hours by the clergy of the different denominations. It was hoped that the children thus receiving instruction at least, if not education, together, would better understand one another, and become as they grew up more united than Irishmen had ever before been as citizens of a common country. The intention was generous, even noble, worthy of all respect, and highly creditable to its author and to Lord Grey's administration. United secular and separate religious instruction was the fundamental principle of the National system of education thus established.

It has often been maintained, though the fact has been denied, that the Presbyterians, who had been

the strongest supporters of the system in Ireland, were the cause of its becoming in everything but in name really denominational. In one of the five resolutions passed at the special meeting of the Irish General Assembly, in which I first witnessed a Presbyterian debate, it was stated that "this representative Church Court adhered to the elementary principles upon which the Synod of Ulster in 1840 agreed to receive aid from the National Board, according to which religious instruction is daily given in our schools, while at the same time the rights of conscience and the sacredness of parental authority are duly respected."

Concessions were made rendering a very large majority of the schools, though professedly non-sectarian, more or less denominational. The more the strict principle of non-sectarian education by the State was adhered to, the more the schools were regarded with suspicion by both Protestant and Catholic clergy. Many of the Protestants of the State Church, like the reverend gentleman I had met at Portadown, were not disposed to dispense with religious instruction at any hours. They maintained an organisation of their own, called the Church Education Society, and generally refused to put their schools under the National Board. The Catholic clergy even up to this time have felt bitterly the prohibition of the use of emblems and other religious decorations. The Board had the national schools under their control, and their rule was to have Catholic and Protestant commissioners in equal

numbers. Had all those commissioners been chosen as thoroughly sympathising with the system they had to administer, their proceedings might have been consistent and logical. But professedly denominational commissioners were subsequently chosen and rules were altered, to which the Presbyterians and the Protestant Episcopal adherents of what began to be called the mixed system were strongly opposed.

Non-sectarian schools under clerical management can never be regarded as purely non-sectarian. Non-sectarian schools conducted by clerical managers of the various Churches seemed to be logically a contradiction in terms. Excellent as united secular and separate religious instruction was in theory, in a country divided as Ireland it never could be satisfactorily carried out. It has not been a failure; but it has scarcely been a success, and so far as it has been a success it has represented a compromise which has never been heartily accepted.

Sir Robert Peel and his Government, in setting up the Queen's Colleges on the non-sectarian principle, had as good intentions as his colleague, then Lord Derby, had as Mr. Stanley thirteen years before in establishing with Dr. Whately the National system of the primary schools. The three collegiate institutions of Galway, Cork, and Belfast were, however, strongly condemned at the time by Sir Robert H. Inglis, member for Oxford University, as the godless colleges. This cry was,

it is fair to state, raised by English Conservatives of the Oxford University type before the colleges had been put under the ban by the Irish Catholic bishops.

The three Queen's colleges were sanctioned by Parliament in the year 1845. Sir Robert Peel's Government had then been in office four years, and had recently adopted a conciliatory policy to Ireland. Not, however, until three years after that Government had ceased, was the last of the three colleges, that of Galway, opened. In the August of the following year, the Queen's University incorporating the colleges was set up by Royal patent. They were condemned by the Propaganda, the Pope, and soon afterwards by a small majority in the Synod at Thurles. Professing to furnish higher education to all religious denominations, the Queen's University was, from the first, not heartily supported by the members of the Irish State Church, who still considered Trinity College as their own. It was also regarded with hostility by the Irish Catholic bishops. It might therefore be considered almost foredoomed to failure. To this question, as it has been debated these many years, and from the beginning of my connection with Irish journalism and Ulster, the familiar proverb may be applied: "You may take the horse to the water but you cannot make him drink." The Irish prelates, acting, as it is fair to say, through instructions from Rome, did all they could to prevent their people from availing themselves of the educational water provided for them succes-

sively and with the best intentions by both Conservative and Liberal Governments.

Sir George Grey, the Home Secretary's alleged promises to the Irish Catholic bishops between the sessions of 1865 and 1866, were the theme of much discussion beyond the Irish General Assembly. The publication of the correspondence only added bitterness to the controversy. The subject was a very perplexing one; the problem between rival pretensions almost insoluble. That problem was not solved by the subsequent grant of the supplemental charter, which was afterwards judicially declared illegal. It has not been solved by the much later establishment of the Royal University at the expense of the Queen's, when the colleges were deprived of their university. It is not even solved at the present time. The graduates and the professors of the Belfast College were taunted by an injudicious opponent with having had their tail cut off. "Yes," was the reply, "and our head too." But the Belfast Queen's College was always the most flourishing of the three institutions. It has managed to exist and to continue to prosper even when deprived both of its head and tail. It has done and is doing a great educational work in the North of Ireland. It may now be considered to have trained two generations of students of a manly and enterprising type, not indeed of the usual scholarly class which is seen at the great Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, but admirably suited for the struggles of active life in the various careers open to all citizens of the United Kingdom. The Queen's College graduate is not a visionary:

the education he receives stimulates him to make his way in the world, and especially in the services of our Colonial and Indian Empire. Those students have done and are doing a good, a patriotic work in many lands. From their lips very little that is intolerant is ever heard. They set an example worthy of imitation by some other classes of Irishmen, both Protestant and Catholic.

CHAPTER IV

1866

Lord Palmerston and the Ulster Tenant Right—Mr. Gladstone as Leader of the House of Commons—His first speech on Ireland—Mr. William Sharman Crawford and the County Down election—Hopeful prospects—Fenianism—Murder of Mr. Fitzgerald—Alarm at Fenianism—Suspension of Habeas Corpus Act—A candid Nationalist editor—Reported strength of the Fenian Organisation—General Cluseret—Fenian insurrections—A terrible night—Execution of the "Manchester Martyrs."

THE controversy respecting changes in the Queen's University with the special meeting of the Irish General Assembly in Belfast had begun before the meeting of Parliament. It increased the interest felt at the beginning of the new session. But it was overshadowed by three other questions. These were Mr. Gladstone's new leadership of the House of Commons, which was a personal one, the likelihood of the Government bringing in another measure of Parliamentary Reform, and the Fenian agitation in Ireland, which had during the autumn and winter assumed alarming proportions.

Lord Palmerston as Prime Minister in recent years had been popular with both the Ulster Liberals and

the Ulster Conservatives. The Liberals might indeed think that he was not anxious to undertake any heroic legislation, that he was not disposed to deal with the ecclesiastical anomalies in Ireland, that he cared very little for reform in general, that he was too much disposed to act on Sir Robert Walpole's maxim, *Quieta non movere.* The tenant farmers, many of whom were Liberals, so far as an unlegalised tenant right before the Ballot Act would permit them to be, did not share the admiration for Lord Palmerston. He was the author of the smart antithesis that tenant right was landlord wrong. No more unjustifiable declaration could be made. It struck deeply in the hearts of the Ulster occupiers, by whom their tenant right was regarded as something almost sacred as an object of superstitious veneration. Lord Palmerston was an Irish nobleman and an Irish landlord. He was, too, as the management of his estate in Sligo showed, a good and generous landlord; but he had what were then the territorial prejudices of his order. His estate, though near, was not in Ulster, and he probably, as his sententious retort in the House of Commons showed, knew nothing of the Ulster tenant right.

Lord Palmerston at his death was just eighty-one years of age. He was born on the 20th of October, 1784, during the first year of Pitt's long administration, and he died on the 18th of October, 1865, after having had, as was thought, a longer official experience than any man then living. He was considered at once as a physical and intellectual

phenomenon. That the oldest member of the House of Commons, as he was represented to be, should be its leader, that as an octogenarian he should be Prime Minister and take the most active part in administration and debate, appeared to contradict the theory of his former Chancellor of the Exchequer, the philosophical Sir George Cornewall Lewis's scepticism about longevity. A little time previously, the then Mr. Cardwell had stated at Oxford that Macaulay had said he could not believe in any one efficiently leading the House of Commons after sixty years of age. Sir Robert Peel had stated much the same thing. I had been told that Mr. Gladstone concurred in that opinion. The then Mr. Disraeli had declared, after his first brief official experience, that the work was more than a man could bear. Mr. Bright had deprecated criticism of Lord Palmerston on the plea that he was an octogenarian. The mere statement of the fact was thought to be enough to meet the objections of political opponents. It was supposed not to be at all likely that for many generations Great Britain would see another octogenarian Prime Minister, another leader of the House of Commons who would virtually be also its oldest member, its Father.

Such were the thoughts which crossed my mind, and which I indeed expressed, when first entering on my new duties on this Irish, on this Ulster scene. "We shall never look upon his like again" was generally said, as the illustrious veteran descended into his tomb in Westminster Abbey.

No person could have thought, when Mr. Gladstone met the House of Commons as its leader on February the 1st, 1866, that in longevity, in Parliamentary and official experience, in intellectual and physical energy, he would beat Lord Palmerston's record.

When he was Lord Palmerston's Chancellor of the Exchequer he once made a speech which seemed to glance up at his octogenarian leader. He said publicly that when he attained, if he ever attained, such an advanced age, he trusted that his mind would be intent on higher things. What higher things Mr. Gladstone has been engaged in since he became, like Lord Palmerston, an octogenarian and an older man than Lord Palmerston does not yet appear. It is difficult to associate these higher things with the great revolution in Ireland and the United Kingdom he has until lately been endeavouring to accomplish.

In the Queen's Speech, which was not delivered until five days after the new Parliament was opened, a strong condemnation of the Fenian conspiracy was forcibly expressed. It was declared to be a conspiracy averse alike to authority, property, and religion, and condemned by all who were interested in their maintenance. For its suppression, it was said, the power of the ordinary tribunals had been exerted, and the authority of the law firmly and amply vindicated. After such a statement it was naturally assumed that the rumoured intention of the ministers to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act had no foundation in fact. Some of the Liberal and Catholic newspapers in Ireland were congratulating their readers that what was

regarded as such a strong measure was not to be adopted by the new Government. It was remarked, however, that there was, what was thought to be very unusual during Lord Palmerston's quiet reign, an adjourned debate on the address in the House of Commons. On the second evening, The O'Donoghue, then regarded as an extreme national patriot, moved an amendment for the omission from the address of the paragraph referring to Ireland. It fell to Mr. Gladstone's lot to make his first reply as leader of the House of Commons in defending the portion of the Queen's Speech condemning Fenianism. The clearer and more unequivocal, he said, was the language expressing the deep guilt of the Fenian conspiracy the better. He told the Commons that they had all the intelligence and industry of Ireland on the side of the Government. He called upon them to recollect that they were one United Kingdom, and that it was their duty to consider and identify the united interests of the whole, whether political or social, by adopting a well-matured scheme of practical legislation, calculated to promote the honour, credit, and welfare of the Empire.[1]

The O'Donoghue's amendment was only supported by twenty-four votes, but it was felt to be of special significance that among the small number of names were those of John Bright and John Stuart Mill.

This debate on Irish affairs was much discussed in the North of Ireland. The Ulster Liberals, who were

[1] Mr. Gladstone's speech in the House of Commons, February 8th, 1866.

somewhat suspicious of Mr. Gladstone on account of his High Church views, and his former association with the Conservative party, eagerly scanned this address for the Liberal sentiments it might be thought to contain. No better Liberals could be found. In England and Scotland the profession of Liberalism was popular and easy. At this time, however, it was very different in the North of Ireland. In the town of Belfast itself it meant exclusion from the public boards, and especially from the Town Council. It carried with it many social drawbacks and a great deal of misrepresentation and abuse. There were in the neighbouring counties Liberal landlords like the then Sir Shafto Adair, Lord Lurgan, and Lord Dufferin; there were, too, a large number of tenant farmers who had no sympathies with Irish Conservatism, and still less with Orangeism. But it was felt that to return a Liberal candidate was almost hopeless in the great borough, and quite hopeless in the counties. William Sharman Crawford had made a gallant struggle in the county of Down to be returned as a Liberal and on Tenant Right principles. A native of the county, his estate being situated near Bangor, some nine miles from Belfast, and managed with the fullest recognition of tenant right, he had very considerable advantages as a candidate. But after the most energetic efforts of his supporters he was defeated, and many of those who had voted for him and against their landlords suffered severely for their independence. The Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, at that time the Most Reverend Dr. Dorrian, when I

met him not long afterwards, said that in the contest his people had made so many sacrifices he would never again call upon them to incur similar hardships.

I repeat, therefore, that to be a Liberal in Ulster at that time was a very different thing from being a Liberal in Great Britain. It meant a great deal more; it meant often pecuniary loss, loss of municipal and Parliamentary honours, loss even of ordinary social courtesies from the great Ulster noblemen and their families, whose names at least were associated with the old ascendency. These Ulster Liberals welcomed the announcement of reforms, both in Great Britain and in Ireland. It needs scarcely be said that they were opposed to Fenianism, and opposed to anything having the appearance of Irish Nationalism. But the injustice of maintaining the Irish State Church, on which The O'Donoghue dwelt, but on which Mr. Gladstone in his reply was silent, was by them generally acknowledged. A broad measure of tenant right, which was also recommended by the Irish chieftain, as the *Spectator* soon afterwards called The O'Donoghue, had also their warmest sympathies. They were, too, thoroughly opposed to the Grand Jury system, based on the principle of taxation without representation, though nominally certain associated cesspayers were supposed to appear as the representatives of their brethren.

Notwithstanding the shadow which Fenianism threw all over Ireland, from the point of view of the Ulster Liberals there was much that was bright

and hopeful. There was a new leader of the House of Commons, there was evidently a new policy, there was even a new administration. Mr. Gladstone announced that the Reform Bill was to be introduced. Politically once more in Ulster, as in the United Kingdom generally, the friends of constitutional progress seemed to revel in the golden hours of youth. It was a time full of expectation; there was something strange, there was something fresh in the air.

But with this joyous feeling there was, even in the most loyal parts of Ulster, a tension on account of the Fenian rumours. The O'Donoghue, it was admitted, had good grounds for saying that this insurrectionary spirit was becoming general, that it was to be met with where it was least expected. Ireland seemed honeycombed with Fenianism.

The effect was seen in the bearing of the police. The Irish Constabulary, not yet called Royal, had in Belfast, after the recent riots, been substituted for the old force which were called "locals." These locals, being appointed by the Town Council, were accused of acting in a partisan spirit, of being Tories and Orangemen. The new police and the new resident magistrates, one a Catholic and the other a Protestant, were now on their trial. They inspired general confidence among the educated moderate and Liberal classes, but they were looked on askance by the partisans of the Town Council. On one occasion, at a meeting to present a testimonial to one of those officers of police, it was remarked in a complimentary manner that the constabulary, through the excellent

conduct of the men, had inspired general confidence and removed the apprehensions of strangers as to the turbulent character of Belfast. A very respectable gentleman, the late Mr. John Lytle, then an alderman, and who had been mayor during the riots, rose up and ridiculed these fears as idle. "If," he said, "the gentleman had been in Belfast before the new police were introduced, he would have found that he could have insured his life at a very small premium."

Fenianism being believed to be rampant, or only waiting indeed to make a spring, the most vigilant precautions were taken to prevent an outbreak. It might be thought that in so very loyal a town as Belfast, with so large a Protestant population, there could be very little fear of Fenianism. One night, on going home, I said to a sergeant, "Well, how is Fenianism getting on here?" He looked at me very suspiciously and replied, "I do not like to hear that name, sir."

"I beg your pardon; I did not think I was saying anything wrong."

"Sir, in such times as these, to mention Fenianism by way of a joke is wrong."

From the manner in which my face was scanned by the good sergeant who objected to my making a joke on Fenianism, I thought that I was in imminent danger of arrest. He appeared to hesitate. I bade him "good-night;" he did not answer. After I had left him and gone some distance, I looked back. There he was, standing in the same place, watching me.

Several strangers were arrested on suspicion. Some were brought up at the police court. Most of them were able to give a very good account of themselves.

Such incidents had their comic features. Two friends went one evening on what they called a courting expedition to Lisburn, the thriving market town seven miles south-west of Belfast, with linen and thread manufactures and full of interesting associations of the Conway family, the last three Marquesses of Hertford and subsequently of Sir Richard Wallace, who there, as in Paris and London, has left permanent monuments of his enlightened philanthropy. The two friends, being strangers to the district, mistook their way. Wherever they knocked for information, they found the door very slowly opened and with great precautions. The cry that "the Fenians were coming" had alarmed the whole neighbourhood. When the strangers had reached their destination and had sat down to a comfortable tea, people rushed in to inform their acquaintances that they had met with two Fenian scouts. One of the suspected persons afterwards wrote: "No sooner had we resumed our homeward march, than about fifteen or twenty very athletic men strode across our path, threatening instant death if we did not go with them to the police office, about two miles distant. . . . I need scarcely say, Mr. Editor, I'll go no more courting until the Fenians are clean put down."[1] Country gentlemen were buying arms and distributing them

[1] *Northern Whig*, February 5th, 1866.

among their labourers. The then Grand Master of the Orange Society, publicly stated at a meeting in Dublin that he had advised the people "to form yourselves into knots of forty or fifty, let three or four men sit up each night, and by that means you need not be burned in your houses at night, and above all things keep your powder dry."

There was, however, some foundation for this very exaggerated alarm, even in the neighbourhood of Belfast. One of the two resident magistrates was Mr. J. C. O'Donnell. A Catholic gentleman with some landed property near Kilmallock, in County Limerick, and a graduate of Trinity College, he had qualified himself as a barrister. His appointment as a magistrate may be said to have originated in one of those dreadful agrarian tragedies which have so often stained the soil of Ireland with blood. A country gentleman, Mr. Fitzgerald, was shot down in the presence of his young wife while they were out for a walk in the fields. Mrs. Fitzgerald gave evidence, and the murderer was convicted and hanged. Mr. O'Donnell showed great energy in assisting to bring the ruffian to justice. He was my informant with respect to this murder. Mr. O'Donnell said that the night before Mr. Fitzgerald's assassin was hanged, the fellow expressed himself in very strong language against Mrs. Fitzgerald for having given evidence which led to his conviction. He thought that his blood would be upon the young widow's head. "Perhaps," he said, tapping his foot on a stone, "Mrs. Fitzgerald, after she has sent me

to my grave, may see me again." He did not feel the slightest remorse for his dreadful crime committed in broad daylight, and in the sight of the murdered man's wife. Some time afterwards I met Mrs. Fitzgerald more than once at Mr. O'Donnell's house. She was a pleasant, bright, and amusing little woman, who in her manner showed no trace of having been associated with such a scene of blood.

After the debate on the address at the beginning of February, the alarm in Ireland with respect to the Fenian conspiracy increased. Seizures of arms were made of a sensational character, but many of them were of fowling pieces which some of the newspapers stated to be double-barrelled guns of a most destructive character, evidently intended for the murder of law-abiding and loyal Protestants. One tradesman wrote: "Permit me to give you a specimen of the exaggeration of which I complain. The *Daily Express* states in reference to two of my cases seized on the 27th ult. that such contained about thirty heavy double-barrelled guns, not like the ordinary fowling pieces, but resembling rifles. The fact is that instead of there being thirty of these nondescript weapons, there was in the cases with the other firearms only one double-barrelled gun, which had been ordered by a gentleman of this neighbourhood expressly for fowling."

A blow was at last struck. On a Friday evening Mr. Gladstone moved that the House of Commons should, on its rising, meet on the next day at twelve o'clock, to consider important business to be brought

forward by the Home Secretary. Sir George Grey himself immediately afterwards announced that this important business would be the repeal for a limited period of the Habeas Corpus Act in Ireland. The Bill was opposed by Mr. John Bright and Mr. John Stuart Mill, as well as of course by The O'Donoghue. Mr. Gladstone, however, defended the measure with much animation. No fallacy, he said, could be of a more dangerous character than the supposition that the proceeding in which the House was engaged was an appeal to a substantially English Parliament to apply the hand of force to Ireland. He again condemned Fenianism in the strongest terms, declared that the Bill had unanimous approval, and that the Irish people required to be defended against themselves. The measure passed through all its stages in both Houses on the Saturday. The House of Lords reassembled nearly at midnight to complete the work with receiving the Royal sanction by commission. It sat into Sunday. Some Presbyterians in the North of Ireland wrote letters condemning this desecration of the Sabbath.

On the Saturday when the Bill was passing through the two Houses, the magistrates in Belfast were seen in deep consultation. It was supposed that they were deliberating on what arrests should be made as soon as the measure became law. The assumption was found to be correct. One arrest was effected on the following Monday, and several others followed. There was a general exodus of suspicious characters, and the detective police care-

fully watched the cross-channel steamers at the quays, and particularly the boats to Glasgow.

They had good ground for these precautionary proceedings. Up to this time it seemed, indeed, that Belfast, of all towns in Ireland, was the least in danger from a Fenian outbreak. The great majority of the inhabitants were thoroughly loyal, and more than loyal. In the event of any disturbance that loyalty might become dangerously active and not at all discriminating.

Just after these arrests were made and the Fenian alarm was at its height, I dined with Mr. O'Donnell, the resident magistrate just mentioned. At his table I was introduced to the editor of a local Nationalist journal, Mr. M'Kenna, who, like Mr. O'Donnell himself, is now no more. Both being Catholics, and Mr. O'Donnell having at this time more or less the confidence of his co-religionists, they talked without reserve of what was occurring. It appeared that some little time before a considerable number of Fenians had arrived in Belfast from Glasgow. They had come to join their local brethren and seriously contemplated an insurrection. The subject was one quite familiar to my two informants. They assured me that not only had these Glasgow Fenians been in Belfast, but that they had with some difficulty been persuaded to leave again just as the Habeas Corpus Act was suspended. Mr. M'Kenna was in their confidence; they knew that he was their friend. He and some other Belfast Nationalists exerted all their persuasive powers to induce the Glasgow Fenians to return home. These men were most desirous, they

said, "to have a bout with the Orangemen." Had such a collision taken place, it might have been followed by a more general outbreak. Mr. O'Donnell had certainly no sympathies with Fenianism, but he was just as well acquainted with what had taken place as my journalistic informant.

Had this Nationalist editor lived until the Irish Parliamentary party became a powerful organisation he would doubtless have been one of its distinguished members. His writings had a considerable amount of rhythm and vivacity. Not then being very familiar with Nationalist newspapers, the audacity of his assertions caused me astonishment. I scarcely knew what to make of it; it seemed like the talk of one oppressed by a hideous nightmare, or almost, indeed, like the declamations of a lunatic. In the course of the dinner I remarked, "You go very far."

"Yes, sir, we do go very far."

"You go a great deal too far for me."

"That is because you are a Whig."

"Why should the name of Whig be mentioned with so much scorn by Nationalists in the North of Ireland?"

"Did not O'Connell call that party 'the base, bloody, and brutal Whigs'?"

"He did, I believe, use some such words at the time of his quarrel with the then Mr. Stanley, when he was Chief Secretary of Lord Grey's administration. He was not very scrupulous with regard to the epithets he applied to his political opponents."

Mr. M'Kenna (laughing): "No, and he was quite right. He knew how to appeal to the popular imagination."

"To the imagination, yes; but not to facts."

"Facts, sir, have little to do with the question."

"May I not mention as a fact that long after O'Connell had denounced the Whigs in such terms, he became one of their most powerful supporters and for several years kept Lord Melbourne's Government in office?"

"Yes, but he virtually sacrificed the cause of Repeal. Things are different now. Young Ireland and physical force may succeed; O'Connell and moral force failed. Moral force will never obtain anything worth having for Ireland."

"But you condemn the Fenians?"

Mr. M'Kenna (laughing, and looking at the resident magistrate): "Well, I can't say that I do. This is their affair."

"Mr. Gladstone condemned them very strongly in the debate on the address."

"Mr. Gladstone! He must work with an English party and conform to English opinion. Now, I detest all English parties and English opinions."

"But how can you obtain anything without the support of an English party?"

"We can obtain a good deal through fear; England never gave Ireland anything except through fear."

"The Whigs sacrificed place and power for more than a quarter of a century in the cause of Catholic Emancipation."

"They could not help it. The Tories were too strong for them. Politicians generally act from selfish motives."

"Then it is quite true what your newspapers say. You believe that there is no such thing as political gratitude."

"Perfectly true. I shall be frank with you. It is our rule never to thank or praise any British Government. We could not afford to do it."

"I understand; this is being frank."

"You must live and learn. To most of us the Whigs are as hateful as the Tories, and even perhaps a little more."

And so this edifying conversation ended. It left on me a painful impression. A British Government, however Liberal, however anxious to carry remedial measures, could not, it seemed, expect any fair play, any just interpretation of motives, from Nationalist newspapers. Judging from the gentleman whose acquaintance I had thus made, and with whom I continued on more or less friendly terms, there was a kind of Nationalist Freemasonry, of which the main principle was to encourage disaffection amid the more ignorant and poorer Irish Catholics. Whatever card the Government might play, it was well understood that in some way or other it was to be trumped. That spirit still exists.

The Fenians did not profess to have any especial grievance. They did not ask for, they did not wish for political reforms, or what were called remedial measures. During the previous autumn an address

had been published from the American Fenians, stating that officers were going over to Ireland to command an army of two hundred thousand men. There had been Fenian arrests at Manchester; a ship with gunpowder had been seized in Liverpool; some two thousand pikeheads had been captured; and it was reported that in the United States there were 380,000 Fenians. The escape of Stephens from prison had acted as a powerful stimulant to the lawless and treasonable organisation. It was the Lord Lieutenant, Lord Wodehouse, who had called on his colleagues to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act. It was Mr. Gladstone who had to take the principal part in suspending the law.

The result had a very decided effect. There was a general stampede of Fenians. They fled like a flock of birds at which a mischievous boy throws a stone. One of them, General Cluseret, afterwards boasted that he had just escaped arrest because he never carried with him any superfluous luggage. A carpet bag was all he equipped himself with in his efforts, which were many, to overturn established governments and to revolutionise kingdoms. Great dismay in commercial circles was produced by the capture of the British schooner *Wentworth* by a Fenian schooner *Friend*. The effect on the Irish trade before that audacious act, as Lord Dufferin stated in the House of Lords, had been pernicious, even when placed side by side with the fact that Belfast had almost doubled its exports in a single year.

But the Fenian prisoners, who were conveyed with

imposing escorts of lancers to the county prisons, were as wretched objects as it was possible to see. Most of them were mere boys: many of them were in rags.

Stephens's arrival in New York, like his escape from prison, gave another stimulant to the agitation. It was immediately followed by the invasion of Canada, and some very decided steps were taken against the brotherhood. Then, as at all times, they showed very little fight. In their retreat across the frontier, some of their leaders were less disposed to shed their blood than to save some beautiful silken flags. The invasion seemed a masquerade. But just as Belfast had been privately invaded by Fenians from Glasgow, so a large number went over from Liverpool to Dublin. Sixty-seven were there arrested. The intended attack on Chester, with the designs on the castle, caused a profound sensation. Belfast and the North of Ireland generally, after having apparently recovered their tranquillity, were again alarmed. The almost simultaneous rising in the following spring in the South and also near Dublin, and as far North as Drogheda, showed at least that some appearance of business was meant. As I was walking down High Street one afternoon, a worthy country gentleman and county magistrate rushed up to me exclaiming, "All Dublin and the neighbourhood in insurrection. Lord Strathnairn out at the head of the troops!" The gentleman was pale and evidently in a state of great excitement. Being still incredulous as to the earnestness and extent

of the movement, I felt a little staggered at the news, and asked myself, "Can we have so miscalculated?"

During all these alarms our policy was one of defiance; it was to show that we were not at all afraid; that if any disturbance occurred in Belfast it would be very slight and easily put down.

On the evening of the day when the news of these various insurrections was received, my friend Mr. O'Donnell, virtually in charge of the peace of the town, came up to the *Northern Whig* office to talk over the events which had occurred and were occurring. After looking round he said, "Dear me! After the stand you have made against the Fenians you are utterly unprotected. Shall I send up a force of police?" "Certainly not," was the reply.

The night wore away. Though a proclamation of the Irish Republic had been sent for publication in the columns of the *Times*, *Morning Post*, and *Daily News*, it remained a proclamation on paper. The Fenian attacks on the police station at Tallaght, and on the barracks at Kilmallock, were repulsed. The vaunt of Stephens that in a short time the Fenians would be fighting in line against the British troops on Irish soil was never carried out. When those insurrectionists were met, they soon threw down their arms and ran away.

Mr. O'Donnell, however, was greatly distressed. He had stated that his property being near Kilmallock, "the Baalbec of Ireland, the place of ruins," he knew that part of the country well, and it would continue perfectly quiet. He added that he had

received a letter the day before from his steward confirming his own pacific assurances. Kilmallock, however, which occupied a very important strategical position, was the object of a comparatively determined Fenian attack, which continued for several hours. Resident magistrates in Ireland are seldom better informed or much wiser than other people.

The trials which followed were of the usual character. They appeared to excite little interest in Ulster. The guilt of most of the prisoners was indisputable. Little fault could be found with the proceedings of the Special Commission to try the two hundred and fifty Fenians, though over it Chief Justice Whiteside presided. It was not thought that the Government showed severity to the convicted prisoners. Some of the Conservatives in the North, who had only recently recovered from their alarm, stated that undue leniency had been shown.

Soon afterwards there was the rescue of Kelly and Deasy from the prison van near Manchester, with the murder of Sergeant Brett, and the subsequent executions of Allen, O'Brien, and Larkin. The carrying out of the sentence was generally considered just by the Ulster Liberals as well as by the Conservatives. It was regarded as showing what was believed to be very necessary, a determination to enforce the laws, especially when the lives of policemen were taken in the execution of their duty. But the Nationalists, of course, formed a very different opinion with respect to this decided step: so did some respectable Catholics who were not Nationalists. On the

Sunday, the day after the execution, I visited some Catholic friends. The ladies of the house—four of whom were Irish and two, I think, English—were deeply affected by the account which had been received of the executions. They all in sorrowing tones exclaimed, "Poor fellows!" The Fenian demonstration in honour of the three men, Allen, O'Brien, and Larkin, had important consequences in Ulster. But it is not necessary to anticipate.

CHAPTER V

1866

Reform Bills and the Irish representation—Lord Cairns and the representation of Belfast—His last election—Appointed Judge of Appeal—Banquet given to him by the Mayor of Belfast—His last entertainment—Extreme partisanship—"Living as I do out of Ireland"—Lord Cairns as leader of the Conservative party in the House of Lords—Mr. Bright in Glasgow and Dublin—His first proposals for Irish Land Purchase—Contemplated invitation to Belfast—An indignant Liberal—An incident of the Rebellion—Two generations of Ulster men.

WHEN the ministers introduced their Reform Bill on the 12th of March, 1866, it was found to be only one for the extension of the franchise. It had to be supplemented by a measure for the redistribution of seats. Scotch and Irish bills were afterwards brought in; but it was announced that they were not to be passed in the course of that session. The gross anomalies in the Irish representation were admitted on all sides. There was much disappointment among the more advanced of the Ulster Liberals at the manner in which their country thus appeared to be neglected.

The evil was indeed not so manifest in Ireland in 1866 as it became after the franchise had been reduced, in both boroughs and counties, to what was thought to be household suffrage. The proposal of the Government for a seven-pound rental franchise in the boroughs, and a fourteen-pound occupation franchise in the counties, so long as Ireland was not affected, could scarcely be expected to excite any enthusiasm. The struggle, however, excited much interest. At Easter it was seen that the Government was in difficulties, that they were right who thought that it was a very hazardous step to introduce a Reform Bill in the first session of a new Parliament not especially elected for any such object. Mr. Gladstone appeared in what to him, who had so long sat for Oxford University, was a new character. He addressed multitudes in Liverpool as a democratic orator, made impassioned appeals in favour of our own flesh and blood, and for the first, though not for the last time, went through the process of burning his boats.

The result, however, was, as it was beginning to be very evident it would be, that the Liberal Government was defeated and had to resign. On the 6th of July, Lord Derby succeeded in forming his third administration. Sir Hugh Cairns, having accepted again the office of English Attorney General, had to come to Belfast for re-election. He appeared in the then Police Court, Howard Street, a mere makeshift of a building, surrounded by his political friends, who, with the exception of the Mayor, were all Conservatives

and Orangemen. The Belfast Liberals, who had been depressed by the very decided defeat of their candidate, Lord John Hay, at the general election, did not on this occasion show themselves on the hustings at all. Sir Hugh implied that he would rather be member for Belfast than Attorney General, or even Lord Chancellor of England. He dwelt on a mistake in the Irish Reform Bill brought in under great pressure by the late Government. This was, as he told his audience, that the borough of Downpatrick, in the county of Down, had been officially represented as in both the counties of Down and Armagh. The Orange audience in the body of the court laughed heartily at this blunder, of which the distinguished lawyer, the native of Belfast as he was called, made the most. Hearing him then for the first and almost the last time, it struck me that there was nothing pleasant in his manner. He was cold, dry, reserved, almost menacing to his political opponents, and especially to the Irish Catholics, with whom, as I have already said, though an Irishman, he had little sympathy if not something like positive hate.

Many years after this time Mr. Matthew Arnold spoke of the Ulster men as Mr. Murdstones, the well-known character in Dickens's *David Copperfield*. He asked how could the Irish Catholics be expected to like being governed by so many Mr. Murdstones. This was very unjust to the Ulster men, who have shown their capacity for government in all parts of the British Empire. Mr. Arnold himself, before his lamented death, became a Liberal

Unionist, and concurred generally with the Ulster men to whom he referred on the question of the maintenance of the Union. But as Sir Hugh Cairns addressed the Conservatives and Orangemen on this day of his last election for Belfast, he did undoubtedly personify Mr. Murdstone.

He was returned on the 13th of July, the day after the 12th, which is so well known as that of the annual Orange gathering in celebration of the Battle of the Boyne. The excitement this caused had scarcely settled down. This was obvious in the bearing of the populace: the waving of orange handkerchiefs, the measured applause of Kentish fire, and the cries of "No Surrender!"

Notwithstanding that Sir Hugh said, or was understood to say, that he preferred being a member for Belfast to the highest legal honours, it was whispered at the time that had it not been that his presence in the House of Commons was absolutely necessary to the Government, he would have been raised to the Woolsack. He did not remain Attorney General more than three months. In October it was announced that he had accepted the office of Lord Justice of Appeal in Chancery, with, of course, a peerage, and that therefore the House of Commons would know him no more. After so much had been said, only a few weeks before, about the English Attorney General being indispensable to his party on the Treasury Bench, this unexpected acceptance, not of the Lord Chancellorship, but of an inferior judicial office, came as a surprise to his supporters in

Belfast. It was plain that they were not in the eminent lawyer's confidence. He often treated them very cavalierly. The local Conservative leader said to me, "Though I was the introducer of Sir Hugh to Belfast as a candidate, when he was so little known, he has never once invited me to his house in London." The retiring Attorney General allowed it to be understood that he was among, but not of, the Belfast Conservatives. To most of them his manner, though of course polite, and even courteous at all times, was never friendly, nor very familiar.

The then Mayor of Belfast was professedly a Liberal. Some of the Liberals doubted the sincerity of his political principles, remarking that at the last election he had voted for the Liberal candidate, Lord John Hay, very late in the day, when it was quite certain that his cause was hopeless. This Mayor, though a Liberal, decided on giving a banquet to Sir Hugh just as he was about to retire from the representation and to receive his judicial office. The banquet was professedly non-political. The principal Liberals of the town and province met their Conservative opponents, and the speakers on both sides rivalled one another in dwelling on the great ability of the very eminent lawyer who had ceased to be a representative of Belfast. Sir Hugh was, however, not thought by his municipal host to have acted very graciously. "Would you believe it?" said the Mayor, long after he had ceased to be in office, "Lord Cairns never called on my wife after I had given him that entertainment. He never seemed to think that I had done

anything for him; but the dinner gave me much trouble and anxiety."

When Sir Hugh Cairns thus met his Liberal opponents at the Mayor of Belfast's table, it was thought that he had taken leave of ordinary party politics. But this did not satisfy the Belfast and Ulster Conservatives generally. They resolved to give him a public banquet of their own. Very soon afterwards it took place in the same Ulster Hall, and it was of an extreme Tory and even Orange character. Some of the speakers did not know whether to refer to Sir Hugh as the English Attorney General or as a judge. He, however, assured them that he was for one night more at least still Attorney General. This was his excuse for delivering a parting Philippic at his political opponents, for taunting Mr. Gladstone and Lord Russell with differences on the Irish Church question, for speaking very bitterly against the Catholics, and for declaiming in favour of "our Protestant institutions." As a Liberal lawyer had been recently refused reappointment as revising barrister for Middlesex by Chief Justice Cockburn, on the ground that as an advocate of Parliamentary Reform he could not be trusted to perform the duties of revision with impartiality, if great things included the less, it seemed somewhat strange that Sir Hugh Cairns, when just about to be formally appointed the highest permanent Judge of Appeal, should to the very last moment of his non-judicial existence have continued to show himself so very decided a partisan. But as has been said, generosity to his political

opponents was not one of his attributes. Some of the other speeches at this dinner were of course even more extreme than the one delivered by the guest of the evening. Several very pronounced Orange clergymen were present, and, as was usual at that time, their addresses were among the most violent.

The Ulster Liberals, on reading the report of the proceedings next day, were highly indignant. Some of them who had been present at the Mayor's neutral dinner thought that they had been placed in a false position. They asked among themselves and in the columns of their newspaper: "Ought a great lawyer, on the very day before his appointment as Lord Justice of Appeal was officially announced, to have thus been present at an extreme Tory and no Popery dinner, and allowed himself to be surrounded by Orange clergymen, one of whom before the assembly broke up was said to have been with difficulty restrained from dancing a pirouette in his presence, and others appeared to be hiccuping Orange toasts?"

There may have been exaggeration in this language. It was, however, undoubtedly used.

With this banquet Lord Cairns's connection with Belfast may be said to have ceased. Though it was called his native town, he very seldom visited it after he had entered the House of Lords. He subsequently presided at a meeting in favour of a trained nurses' institute, but this was so far as can be remembered his last public appearance in the future city which, from the Conservative point of view, was so proud of him as one of its representatives. He kept up no personal

association with Belfast such as other eminent public men who owed much less to it afterwards did. When applied to by a distinguished Belfast surgeon, who has since risen to great eminence in London, for a subscription in aid of a Dublin asylum for idiots, to which some of his old constituents had liberally contributed, Lord Cairns expressed his surprise at such an application, "living," as he wrote, "as I do out of Ireland." About the same time Lord Cairns was reminded that he had, as representative of Belfast, been accustomed to subscribe a yearly guinea to the Chemico-Agricultural Society, which has done good work in Ulster. The subscription ceased. The fact was commented upon: but Lord Cairns's guinea was never afterwards received.

This eminent Ulster man did subsequently realise the expectation of his friends so far as for a time to become the Conservative leader in the House of Lords. But his leadership was far from being a success. It was a disappointment. One session of Lord Cairns's leadership was enough. His style of addressing the Upper House was not that of the leader of a proud and powerful aristocracy. He spoke to the Peers like a legal family adviser prepared to look well after the interests of his clients. He appeared colder and more unsympathising in the House of Lords than he had been in the House of Commons. Mr. Murdstone as a Peer would have been even less attractive than as a Commoner. As a political leader of patricians he would have been impossible. In taking leave of Lord Cairns it may be stated that, though

this sketch may be thought somewhat unfavourable, its justice will not be denied nor questioned by many of those who had long been politically associated with him, and who still survive. Most of those with whom he long acted in Belfast and in Ulster generally have admitted the correctness of most of the details here mentioned.

Just before the last Conservative banquet to Lord Cairns was given, Mr. Bright had addressed a large audience on Parliamentary Reform in the Glasgow City Hall. He had been the object of a great demonstration of the various trades in the city over which Scott's genius has thrown such a halo. It was known, too, at the time that he would accept an invitation from some twenty-one Irish members, transmitted to him by Sir John Gray, to visit Dublin. The day of the Dublin meeting had been fixed.

Mr. Bright's Glasgow address was noticed by several of the speakers at the Belfast Conservative entertainment. They regarded too with some alarm his appearance on Irish soil. To them it boded no good. The Great Tribune, as Mr. Bright was then called, was treated with little respect by the Ulster Tory orators. He was denounced as a demagogue, as a revolutionist, and as "that man." In his Dublin speech four days afterwards Mr. Bright referred to "the gentlemen who had been dining together at Belfast" as likely to agree with him so far as to admit that there were serious evils in the Irish land system, and that there had been a constant

and bitter war between the owners and occupiers of the soil.

Mr. Bright's speech was transmitted to Belfast that evening by telegraph. This was at the time thought to be a great feat in journalistic enterprise. The Conservative newspapers did not care to incur the expense, because they deemed Mr. Bright almost unworthy of such prominence. But the speech excited much attention in Ulster, and especially among the Ulster tenant farmers. It contained the first suggestions about Irish land purchase which in an altered form have been embodied in some five Acts of Parliament, beginning with the one carried in 1870 by Mr. Gladstone's Government. The provisions that measure contained for allowing tenants to purchase their farms with the State aid are still called "The Bright clauses."

The purchase scheme, as its author first developed it in Dublin, had nothing of the general character it afterwards assumed. It only proposed that the estates of English noblemen in Ireland, such as Lord Derby, the then Prime Minister, Lord Lansdowne, Lord Fitzwilliam, the Duke of Devonshire, and others, should be bought by the credit of the State and sold out farm by farm to the occupying tenants. Some of the Dublin newspapers denounced this plan as confiscation. There was in it no confiscation. Mr. Bright declared his willingness to give to the expropriated English noblemen more than the market price of their Irish estates. This he explained in his second Dublin speech, delivered early in

November at a public meeting, when he received an address from the Trades. But it was objected with truth that the English noblemen and other proprietors holding Irish estates were among the very best of the Irish landlords. Their tenants were not rack-rented; they were for the most part indulgently treated. The management of the English estates both in the North and South of Ireland was far more liked than that of the Irish landlords generally, many of whom were poor, and sought to make the most of their property.

In Ulster, indeed, among the farmers who had their tenant right respected, it was admitted that Mr. Bright had struck the right chord. They did not then hope that the State, that any Government, would go so far as has since been done by both Liberal and Conservative administrations. But they began to see a prospect of having more than an unsecured tenant right. Some of the tenants of the London Companies in the North-West of Ulster wrote in the newspapers that if any absent proprietors were to be bought out with State money, and their farms sold to the occupiers, they had the first claim. What were the London Companies but great absentee landlords? Their position as Irish landowners became less and less defensible. That in the county of Londonderry the Irish Society acted liberally from an ordinary landlord's point of view could scarcely be denied; but grave questions with respect to the absolute ownership of the land held by the London Companies began to be

raised, and can scarcely be considered yet to be settled.

Mr. Bright had produced such an effect in Dublin that the more advanced members of the Ulster Liberal party wished him to be invited to Belfast. At a private meeting held with this object, it soon appeared a decided difference of opinion prevailed. The more moderate Liberals, who were called Whigs, professed to be in favour of inviting Mr. Gladstone and not Mr. Bright. They were guilty of some little disingenuousness. Even if invited they did not expect Mr. Gladstone to come; but they thought that this proposal would defeat the design of inviting the member for Birmingham, who was looked upon as a far more extreme politician and somewhat obnoxious to those who then professed such admiration for Mr. Gladstone as the leader of the Opposition. The time came when many of them had in this respect to reconsider their opinions. But it was yet in the far distance. Applauded as Mr. Bright was in Dublin, in neither of his speeches was there a single reference to the possibility of Irish Home Rule.

The grandson of one of those United Irishmen who had been hanged was very angry at the manner in which the proposed invitation from the Belfast Liberals to Mr. Bright had been, as he said, "jockeyed." He had not himself been present at the meeting; but he sought for information on the subject. "You have heard," he said, "of the meeting?"

"Yes."

"Why was I not invited?"

"I did not know that you had not been: it was a small and private meeting."

"Yes, a small and private meeting. That is just what I object to. The Belfast Liberals delight in holding small and private meetings. That is why they do so little good."

"They are, you know, in a minority."

"But a minority never becomes a majority by holding private meetings. This is an admission of impotence."

"Mr. Bright himself said that he had generally been in minorities."

"It was not by holding private meetings that the Anti-Corn Law League succeeded in repealing the Corn Laws."

"But the Belfast Liberals are in a very different position from the Manchester men who began the struggle against the Corn Laws. The free traders were sure of popular sympathy. Here Liberals have to make great sacrifices and get no sympathy."

"They deserve none. They have outraged John Bright, who is much too good for them. Wretched Whigs!"

This excited Liberal rushed out of the room in a state of great indignation. With him and so many Ulster men Liberal principles were hereditary. His grandfather was that Rev. James Porter, the Presbyterian minister of Greyabbey previously alluded to, who for complicity in the rebellion was

hanged at the gate of his own church, then called a meeting house. This gentleman had as a boy left his father's house, taking with him two shirts that were drying on a hedge. He spent some years as a private tutor, but his family never heard of him again until he was appointed the Presbyterian minister of Greyabbey, on the Strangford Lough, and not far from Lord Londonderry's residence, Mountstewart, in the county of Down. He was married to one of the young ladies of the family in which he taught. He was a handsome man, and his wife had also great personal attractions. Stories are still current about Mr. Porter having been hanged on account of the love a great official entertained for his wife. These deserve no credit. Mr. Porter was undoubtedly an active agent in the rebellion. He was the author of a well-known political satire, entitled "Billy Bluff," which appeared in the *Northern Star* newspaper two years before the outbreak, and which showed very plainly what the author's political sentiments were. Very soon afterwards he went over Ulster, professedly giving lectures on natural philosophy. His real business was the swearing in of United Irishmen. He and another Presbyterian clergyman, the Rev. W. Steele Dickson, were said to have taken over to the sands at Whitehouse an informer, Newell, who never again appeared alive. It was even suspected that the man had been strangled by the two clergymen, and that his body had been buried in the sands. Mr. Porter, in reply to the hangman who offered him a cap for his head, declared

that he had one himself. His son, a boy of fourteen, carried a stand of colours at the battle of Ballynahinch, escaped to America, and there became Judge Porter.[1]

His grandson, who has been just mentioned, took a deep interest in the land question and the church question. He used to call the land question "my question," and made several ingenious suggestions with respect to it, and to the policy of disestablishment. In *Macmillan's Magazine* he published a paper on "Equivalents," with especial reference to disendowment. He was an able and kindly gentleman, who might have had a successful political career. For a time, at least, he had the confidence of the Ulster tenant farmers; but they were deprived at a critical season of an advocate who was a good man of business, and thoroughly understood commercial questions.

He died suddenly when just at middle age. It seems strange to look back little more than a quarter of a century on a province, and a bustling and progressive town. There was the younger generation, then pressing onward; there was also the elder generation, then retiring. It is but just to say that among those Ulster men there were an energy and independence beyond what could be witnessed in many of the British towns, or even in the great metropolis itself. The situation of the Northern

[1] See an interesting little work recently published under the title of *Ulster in* '98, by Robert M. Young, B.A., editor of the *Town Book of Belfast.*

province generally cultivates a disposition of self-reliance, manliness, and patriotism. The people acquired the habit of thinking and acting for themselves. This was, and is, one of their most marked attributes. The fact was striking more than a quarter of a century ago. Since that time, indeed, the younger generation have taken the lead, and are prouder of the progress of the North-East of Ulster, with Belfast as its capital, than their fathers were. Many of those who were so ardent and confident have fallen while comparatively young; their memories, their figures, seem to crowd upon the brain and leave an impression of the brevity of life. On calling back to mind so many who have vanished from the scene, the very tones of their voices echoing in the ear, their familiar forms still present to the mind's eye, the truth of the great dramatist's words which produced such effect on Jean Paul Richter is fully recognised, and even what were realities seem to have become unreal:

> We are such stuff as dreams are made of,
> And our little life is rounded with a sleep.

CHAPTER VI

1866—1867

Lord Dufferin—His Letters to the *Times* in Defence of the Irish Landlords—Mr. Cardwell as Irish Chief Secretary—"I settled that"—Land Proposals of Mr. Fortescue and Lord Mayo—Attempt at Limitation of the Ulster Tenant Right—The Origin of the Custom—A Veteran Journalist and Tenant Righter—Improvements made by the Tenants—Sir Shafto Adair—Sir Thomas M'Clure—Dr. Drennan and the United Irishmen—Mr. O'Connor Morris, as "*Times* Commissioner," on the Land Question—Visit of the Social Science Congress—Lord Dufferin's Address as President—The President's Dinner—The Imminence of the Church Question—Enthusiasm of Ulster Liberals.

ONE eminent man, who does not owe his eminence to his coronet, then resided for a considerable time every year on his estate near Belfast. He still survives, and is still rendering important services to his country. He was, too, one of the first to criticise Mr. Bright's proposal to buy out the English landed proprietors in Ireland.

In referring to Lord Dufferin, the writer of these pages feels himself under considerable embarrassment. Having been honoured with his lordship's friendship and confidence almost from the beginning of the time over which this narrative of personal experiences in Ulster extends, he feels that he cannot say all he

might wish to say on the subject of Lord Dufferin's relations with the province generally, with Belfast in particular, and with all the ramifications of the Irish question, without being suspected, though unjustly, of some partiality. But Lord Dufferin has ever been most regarded by those who have had the best opportunities of knowing him, and among whom he inspires a thoroughly personal affection. Even after their unhappy separation on the question of the French Revolution, Burke said of Charles Fox, "He is a man made to be loved." Which of our public men is more loved by those who are acquainted with him, and which of them is more deserving of love, than Lord Dufferin? It may be easy indeed to write freely of the dead; it is difficult to write in a similar spirit of the living.

At this time Lord Dufferin was just forty. On coming of age he had made a most liberal speech to his tenantry. It was regarded as very generous, almost too generous, exciting hopes of a golden age among the farmers on his Down estate. Six years before, Lord Dufferin had been selected by Lord Palmerston, who had for him more than an ordinary political regard as a rising young Irish nobleman, to fill the post of Commissioner for Syria, to inquire into the causes of the recent massacres. In this arduous office he was very successful, showing at once his two especial characteristics, delicacy and firmness. It was stated that when the last of the disturbances was going on, Lord Dufferin ran into the bay with his yacht, which had only one brass twelve-pound

gun, kept the insurgents in check, landed, and hanged a blood-stained pasha before the eyes of his ignorant and fanatical followers. In the last Liberal Government he had lately been Under-Secretary of State for War, and had of course left office with his political friends.

Lord Dufferin was a Liberal. Personally he was always popular; his charm of manner, even among his deeply prejudiced political opponents, always producing an irresistible effect. But, residing as he did at Clandeboye, on his family estate on the County Down side of the Belfast Lough, he occupied among the Tory noblemen and gentlemen in the North a somewhat isolated position. As they passed the Clandeboye Railway Station, with the Dufferin coronet carved on its walls, some of them shook their heads and regarded themselves as, for the time, in the territory of an enemy. He had married his relative, the charming Miss Hamilton, of Killyleagh Castle, the granddaughter of that Archibald Rowan Hamilton who was so deeply committed to the projects of the United Irishmen, and who at the last succeeded in making his escape to France. Lord and Lady Dufferin inspired somewhat of a romantic interest.

His lordship's *Letters from High Latitudes* had been widely read in Ulster, and indeed are still familiarly quoted. They show the author's adventurous daring. A brother yachtsman, now a peer, said at a dinner of the Royal Ulster Yacht Club—"Lord Dufferin went into high latitudes with the sides of his yacht entirely unprotected. This was not a prudent thing to do;

the sides might easily have been crushed by the ice." Lord Dufferin's yachting in the Belfast Lough, and subsequently in the Sea of Marmora and in the Bay of Naples, was characteristically unpretentious. It was and is his delight to go out in a small yacht by himself, and, by an ingenious arrangement of the ropes, to manage the sails and to steer the vessel at his own will and pleasure. Some of his friends have viewed this practice with alarm; but, though apparently slight and delicate, he is utterly insensible to fear.

With his usual chivalrous spirit, regardless of personal consequences, after Mr. Bright spoke in Dublin, Lord Dufferin wrote his series of letters in the *Times* on the Irish land question. They were professedly a defence of the Irish landlords; they were avowedly from an Irish landlord's point of view. No other nobleman could have written with so much grace and culture in defence of his order. In a private letter published, it was afterwards said, without his consent, Mr. Bright had used the word exterminators as applied to the Irish landlords. The charge thus conveyed was resented by Lord Dufferin. But he was far from speaking slightingly of Mr. Bright's proposal to expropriate, with the money of the State, the English proprietors of Irish estates, at 10 per cent. above the real value, and sell their land to the tenants. When this first scheme of land purchase, soon to be far more broadly carried out, was denounced by the Conservative Press in Ireland, and by Liberal members of the House of Commons, Lord

Dufferin admitted that for it a good deal might be said. In his concluding letter to the *Times*, just before the meeting of Parliament for the session of 1867, he wrote of Mr. Bright's plan—"If he can persuade the British tax-payer to agree to it, I should certainly offer no opposition to the project." Lord Dufferin never was an enemy of Irish land purchase. He might even claim, long before Mr. Bright spoke on it, to have been its originator. The evidence he gave before the Bessborough Commission may be considered on this point conclusive.

Mr. Bright's two speeches in Dublin, and Lord Dufferin's letters to the *Times*, from such opposite points of view, had undoubtedly the effect of keeping the Irish land question prominently in the front. It was evident that the time would soon come when any Government, whether Liberal or Conservative, would have to deal with the subject in a more comprehensive manner than had yet been seriously attempted. Though Lord Palmerston had committed himself to the antithetical proposition that tenant-right was landlord's wrong, early in his last administration, his Chief Secretary, the then Mr. Cardwell, had attempted to do something in the business as well as on the education question. He was sanguine indeed that his proposals had virtually solved both problems. Speaking to a friend after he had left the Irish administration, Mr. Cardwell said, "I found two questions perplexing all Irish Governments. The one was the education question: I settled that. The other was the land question: I settled that. Then

there is the Church question; I was not long enough in my Irish office to settle that."

With all respect to this well-meaning official, Mr. Cardwell neither settled the education question nor the land question. Notwithstanding all the attempts to legislate satisfactorily upon them, notwithstanding the measures which have been carried during more than a quarter of a century to put an end to them, they have with Promethean vigour and versatility constantly revived. First they may appear to take one shape and then another, but essentially they are always the same.

The measure which was introduced by Lord Russell's administration in the previous year was, it was said, arranged by Lord Dufferin and the then Chief Secretary, Mr. Fortescue, afterwards Lord Carlingford. They were both animated with the very best intentions. The Bill professed to give something like security of tenure and compensation for disturbance. It sought to assume that, where there was no express agreement to the contrary, improvements under certain conditions were the property of the tenants. In principle this went very far. They who sought to have it affirmed by legislation, whatever might be pretended, were no enemies of the Irish tenant farmers.

The Irish Chief Secretary of Lord Derby's administration in the session of 1867 also introduced a new Irish Land Improvement Bill, as well as a supplementary measure. That Chief Secretary was Lord Naas, afterwards the lamented Earl of Mayo who

came to so sad an end as Viceroy of India. He too had excellent intentions respecting Ireland, and a considerable amount of originality and independence, which was not thought to be a recommendation to those who wished to see a Conservative Government in Ireland treading in the old, well-worn, party paths.

The so-called Land Improvement Bill of Lord Naas was evidently framed, as might be expected, not to offend the susceptibilities of the Irish Conservative landlords. At that time there were great objections on the part of many Irish landlords to granting leases. This fact ought not to have been forgotten by those who afterwards blamed Lord Dufferin for having offered very long leases to his tenants and given them a security which they did not then possess by law. That those leases gradually contemplated and provided for the extinction of tenant-right was true. But the anomalous position of landlord and tenant in Ireland has been made more anomalous by subsequent legislation. It is now almost universally acknowledged in the North of Ireland, by the tenant farmers who cried out most loudly for what were called the Ulster three F's, Free Sale, Fair Rents, and Fixity of Tenure, that there cannot be two proprietors of the same farm, of the same soil. Hence the demand for land purchase, and even compulsory land purchase with the money of the State, has become general, and most general where the Ulster tenant-right on the large estates has been most scrupulously respected.

But the Bill introduced by Lord Naas offered no legal recognition of tenant-right. It contained no

security of tenure. To propose to advance money to the tenants for the improvement of their farms, while affording them no security that they should themselves continue to enjoy those improvements, seemed indefensible. But the measure contained two clauses on fixtures, taken from a measure introduced by Mr. Napier, afterwards Sir Joseph, as Irish Attorney General in a former Conservative administration. The tenant might have the value of buildings he had erected at his own expense, but only after giving notice to the landlord and offering him the opportunity of purchasing. Their value was to be determined by arbitrators, and in each district a surveyor of the Board was to be appointed, not with a salary, but only with payment according as he might induce the tenants to make improvements. It thus, as was pointed out at the time, gave an interest to the surveyor to persuade ill-informed tenants to undertake improvements which might not be the most judicious nor permanently beneficial, either to the tenants themselves or to their landlords.

Lord Naas's Bill was never pressed. The Government were too much occupied with their various reform proposals in Parliament, ending at last by what Lord Derby himself called the leap in the dark to household suffrage in the boroughs, to pay much attention to their Irish Land Improvement Bill, which, to say the truth, was with some good points always regarded as a half-hearted measure.

But the Irish land question no longer slept.

Every day appeared to add strength to the controversy. It was very easy saying, as some of the Conservative newspapers did, that the inordinate competition for land among the farmers was the cause of much rack-renting. This being admitted proved nothing but that, excepting in the Northern parts of Ulster, there was only one industry, that of agriculture, and that in consequence landlords could dictate their own terms to the occupiers. In Ulster, where tenant-right prevailed, and was generally respected as, according to Lord Dufferin in his letters, "a gracious custom," it was often sold at as large a price as the fee-simple. Several landlords had attempted to limit the amount by only allowing five pounds an acre to be paid for this right; but any limitation was most unpopular among the tenants. They insisted that the Ulster custom included free sale: that is, sale without any limitation whatever. To an Englishman who came a stranger to Ulster, there was something singular in announcements which from time to time appeared in the newspapers to the effect that a certain farmer had a farm "to sell." This he always called "my farm." It appeared to imply that he was the absolute owner; but it was far from being the fact. "My farm" simply meant the tenant right on the farm, which was offered to be disposed of when the holding was vacated to a future occupier approved of by the landlord. The landlord's consent was generally presumed or implied. But the important fact was indisputable that the landlords generally

consented to the sale of what was thus regarded as the tenants' interest. In Ulster the tenant right of farms was regularly bought and sold with such sanction.

The Ulster custom was thus carried out. It was most strictly respected by the larger landlords on such estates as the Marquis of Downshire's and the Marquis of Hertford's; but it was on one condition. At election times the tenants were to vote for the candidates their landlords supported: independence in this matter was scarcely ever permitted by the Conservative landlords. The Liberals, fewer in number, and under the circumstances not able to return any representative in the province, where at the time the boast of the Conservative electors was that they returned all the Ulster representatives, were not under the same inducement to show indulgence to the tenants. A good landlord was, according to the farmers, one who allowed in all its unlimited extent the Ulster custom, with free sale; a bad landlord was one who sought to restrain its full exercise.

There has been much controversy in Ulster respecting the origin of this custom. The extreme advocates of the tenants maintained that it originated in the Ulster settlements, that according to the terms on which the confiscated estates were granted, there were to be no tenants at will, that even the patent rolls were prohibitory of a precarious tenure. In some of the documents there are such restrictions; in others there are not. But the Ulster tenant-right custom arose in the very

necessities of the relative positions of the landlords and tenants who came over to Ireland. Planted amid a semi-barbarous and hostile population, they had naturally a common cause, a common interest. The tenants made even the permanent improvements; they expended their time, their labour, their money on the soil which they could not call their own.

But even among the descendants of the Ulster tenants, so many of whom came over with their landlords, there was in the last century much discontent. Emigration to the colonies had begun. The Hearts of Steel became a formidable body, originating in agrarian grievances. Numbers of these men with their families emigrated to the New England colonies after the Seven Years' War and before the outbreak of the American war. They left with no friendly feelings to the Irish, which was thought to be the British, Government. It is very well known, it is a historical fact, repeated with great significance even while this controversy with respect to the Irish land question was going on, that many of the most determined opponents of George the Third's ministers in the high-handed proceedings adopted against the colonies were these expatriated Ulster men. Though much was said, and justly said, against the penal laws as they affected the Catholics, the spirit in which they were administered affected the so-called Protestant North: the ascendency families, for whom the Government only seemed to exist, were not so considerate to their Protestant tenants as they ought to have been. This ascend-

ency was a Protestant Episcopalian one. The Presbyterians only indirectly and grudgingly were permitted to avail themselves of its advantages. The Catholics in Ulster, little cared for, little thought of by their rulers, occupied the mountains, or what were called the "mountainy districts." But even the Protestants on the plains, as cultivators of a better soil, considered that they had much reason for complaint. Injustice begets injustice. Some of the people in whose alleged interests an oppressive policy is carried on not seldom themselves experience its evil effect.

This undoubtedly was the case in Ulster. In conversing with eminent Irish judges, including more than one Lord Chancellor, I asked how it was that even where tenant right fully prevailed in the province, the presumption of the law in the matter of improvements was, and so long continued to be, all against the tenants. The reply was, that this was an inheritance from the old penal laws. According to them the Catholics could not be owners of the soil. A lease for thirty years was all that they could legally hold. This law was indeed evaded; but its spirit continued to exist long after it was repealed. It was applied to the Protestant tenants of the North of Ireland, whose ancestors, as their advocates in tenant right associations asserted, came over to Ireland under express conditions which had been flagrantly and feloniously disregarded.

At the very beginning of this tenant right agitation in Ulster there were extreme men with extreme demands. It was maintained that the Ulster tenants,

who came over to carry out a British system of colonisation, had reclaimed the wilderness by their own exertions, and ought not to pay more in rent than what it became customary to call from America the prairie value. There was what was called the half-crown an acre demand. On some platforms it had been asserted that a shilling an acre might be thought sufficient for a landlord in justice to receive.

There was a veteran journalist, Dr. James M'Knight, who had formerly been editor of the *Banner of Ulster*, and was at this time the editor of the *Derry Standard*. He was regarded as one of the greatest authorities on the Ulster land question from the tenants' point of view. When Mr. Carlyle visited Londonderry many years before the time here referred to, he was shown by Dr. M'Knight the historical scenes of the Maiden City and its neighbourhood. He describes his journalistic cicerone as talking loudly. Loud he may have been at that time, but in 1867, when I first made his acquaintance, this gentleman was seventy-four years of age, and his voice, like his frame, generally feeble. In him, as in a good many of the Ulster people, whether as politicians, journalists, or merchants, that preternatural suspicion, which Carlyle represents as so characteristic of Jacobin France, was fully developed. For the landlords, of course, he had not a good word. But he suspected the motives of a great many other people; he suspected, indeed, nearly everybody, even those who were with him in the most intimate relations. Of this when he was on his deathbed some years

afterwards a very remarkable instance could be given.

The *Derry Standard* was, as not long before the two Belfast morning newspapers had been tri-weekly, published bi-weekly. On meeting me at breakfast with my host, the highly respected Rev. W. M'Clure, Presbyterian minister in Derry, and brother of the late Sir Thomas M'Clure, Dr. M'Knight said, "If it were not to see you, I should not have come out to-day."

"Why?"

"Because it is my writing day. We publish to-morrow."

"We publish every day."

"Ah," said the Derry editor, "I had forgotten that. You write every day."

"Yes."

"This is very extraordinary."

"Almost as extraordinary," I answered, "as the instance given by Thackeray of the editor of the foreign correspondence, waiting up in a tavern for the arrival of the mail before railways and electric telegraphs were, and then taking his news to the office, and getting it ready for that day's paper. This is cited by Thackeray as a proof of the wonderful enterprise of the *Times*. The enterprise of that great journal is now very much beyond what it was when Thackeray wrote."

"I never read Thackeray. My ancestors were Scotch. My favourite reading now, and at all times, is the Scotch metaphysics. They sharpen the mind, give it analytical power."

This was the veteran Dr. M'Knight, who is still

well remembered in Ulster, and whom the tenant farmers regarded as an oracle on their side of the land question. On that question he had written a series of letters addressed to Lord John Russell when he was Prime Minister. One of his grievances was that Lord John had passed the letters over without notice. "But of course," said Dr. M'Knight, "he knew nothing, and still knows nothing, of the Ulster land question. No Englishman can understand it. I see from your articles that you don't."

"Thank you; perhaps I may live and learn."

"No Englishman can understand the land question." This was the statement made for many years, and until the Irish Land Acts of 1881 and 1887 became law. But if Englishmen had recalled to their minds what was meant by goodwill as a custom, of which in some parts of England they had great experience, they would have begun to have some idea at least of what was meant by Ulster tenant right. "Goodwill" is a thoroughly English term; it expresses an English fact. We may regard it as in some degree equivalent to the other thoroughly English term "fair play," which consists in a recognition of what is substantially just.

What is substantially just. But it was very difficult perhaps, and is still difficult, to convince many English or Scotch people of what might be substantially just to the Irish and especially to the Ulster tenant farmers. They had been taught to recognise that a landlord's rights in his estate were absolute, that there could be no such thing as a joint proprietor-

ship. But in Ulster before the Land Acts a joint proprietorship existed, a moral and virtual proprietorship, though not recognised by the law. Lord Dufferin at this time limited his sanction of the sale of tenant right on his estate to five pounds an acre.

But it is only just to admit that, according to his opportunities and his resources since he had succeeded to his estate, Lord Dufferin had comparatively spent more money on it than perhaps any other Irish landlord has done on his. Whether this money was at all times judiciously spent may be a question; but it was spent, and was spent with a view to improvements, when many other landlords contented themselves with making none. On the Clandeboye estate are model cottages. They could not have been made to be what they are without some encouragement and superintendence by their landlord. The houses he built for the coastguards and for the workpeople engaged round Clandeboye are in a style far superior to similar buildings on the estates of much larger landlords, of landlords who were under far greater obligations to their tenantry. One of those great landlords, as has been remarked, could at one time command eight votes to the House of Commons, returned from the neighbourhood. These were worth paying for even from a very interested and private point of view; they might be held to have a solid marketable value; all the more valuable, indeed, before the smaller rotten boroughs in England had been done away with by the Reform Act of Lord Grey's Government.

Lord Dufferin was under no similar obligations to

his tenantry. As a Liberal he could command no votes. He had no pocket boroughs. He maintained, and with some reason maintained, that his estate had been more or less Englishly managed, and therefore did not come under the category to which the full recognition of the Ulster custom applied. As he showed in his last letter to the *Times*, after Mr. Bright's scheme of land purchase had been broached, Lord Dufferin thought that the Government might settle the complications of the Ulster land question by advancing money to the landlords to buy up the tenant right of their occupiers. But as a great advocate of the tenants said to me, "It would be impossible in this way to get rid of the Ulster custom; like a cat it has nine lives, it has indeed more than nine lives. It would be more difficult to kill than a snake. It has many heads, and if one were cut off, the others would continue, and even where the old head was, another would be sure to sprout up."

A few days after these words were spoken I visited, from Saturday to a Monday, a country gentleman living in the neighbourhood of the very picturesquely situated town of Ballycastle, a seaport on the north-east coast of Antrim. Thence I was driven to the Giant's Causeway on a coach by my host, who loved to feel the reins of a four-in-hand. He was a strong Conservative. As we passed one substantial farm-house after another, with equally substantial out-buildings, I asked my friend whether they were erected by the landlord or the tenant. The reply invariably was, "The tenant." It became almost monotonous.

At last I asked, "With your knowledge of this neighbourhood, can you show me one good farmhouse built by the landlord for a tenant?" His answer, almost mournfully, was, "Not one."

Ballycastle is twenty miles north of Ballymena, a still more prosperous town, near which there are many bleach-greens. It has long been a centre of the brown linen trade. This ancient town has become quite modern, transformed under the auspices of the Adair family, to whom Ballymena itself owes much. The proprietor was then Sir Shafto Adair, who built a castle here after the fashion of those Scotch strongholds in which his ancestors resided. One of his forefathers with the tenants had come over, like so many others, to colonise and to civilise this part of Ulster. The tenants, as the future Lord Waveney informed me, were as proud of their ancestry as the English nobles who boast of having had Norman ancestors that came over with the Conqueror. They could look back nearly three hundred years. Many of them had resided on the same farms for several generations. If another farmer, not belonging to the body, came on to the estate, by the purchase of the tenant right from the out-going tenant, with of course the landlord's sanction, he was looked upon as a new man, as an inferior person, without claim to ancient birth or hereditary descent.

Tenant right was scrupulously respected by Sir Shafto Adair, as it had been by his father, Sir Robert, and still is by his brother, who has inherited the property and the baronetage, but not the peerage.

Sir Shafto and his predeccssor and his successor were called good landlords. They were among the best. But here again, to the question whether the landlord or the tenants made the improvements on the agricultural holdings, Sir Shafto gave the reply, "Oh, of course the tenants."

Sir Shafto Adair himself was a professedly Liberal reformer on the land question, as on all questions. He was a kind-hearted cultivated man, with all the manners of the old aristocratical Whig school, whose headquarters were at Brooks's Club. This kind of politician is now threatened with extinction: if it be not already extinct. Mr. Gladstone's ascendency in the Liberal party has not been favourable to the old Whigs, with whom he can never be thought to have had much sympathy. Yet they represented a great traditional and historical connection, to which it may be said with truth Great Britain owes her constitution and very much of what may be regarded as her public freedom.

Well-intentioned as Sir Shafto Adair was, he was very proud of his hereditary associations with the Whig party. He generally allowed it to be understood that he moved in a loftier region than that of ordinary political mortals. He always endeavoured to be very gracious, but he left on those with whom he was in political and personal relations the sense of being patronised. He had read much. He could talk on most political questions very ingeniously; but his mind seemed to move within a circle, and it was difficult to draw from what he said any practical conclu-

sions. No man had spent more money in electioneering contests. He had gone on forlorn hopes. He had contested constituency after constituency with apparently very little prospect of success. I asked him once how many times he had been returned. "Only once," he replied, "and that by an accident." He had yet to contest other two constituencies with similar want of success before he obtained his peerage, that he had long expected, and had, through his pecuniary sacrifices, which afterwards kept him impoverished, dearly won.

Not long after the discussion of the land question had begun, principally by Mr. Bright and Lord Dufferin, Sir Shafto Adair himself presided at a tenant farmers' meeting in Ballymena. It was new to me to hear the Irish landlords denounced under the chairmanship of a landlord. One of the principal speakers said afterwards that he had been obliged to restrain himself out of respect for Sir Shafto.

Among tenant farmers not remarkable for their extreme views a very strong feeling prevailed against the whole system of Irish land tenure. The efforts, well intentioned as they were, made by successive Governments and Parliaments to provide a judicial machinery to dispose of encumbered estates, and others of a not dissimilar character, had deepened the discontent with the existing system. In Ulster, indeed, the feeling was stronger than anywhere else, and for a very intelligible reason. In this province the tenant right prevailed, but as it had no legal recog-

nition it was sold with the estate, and bought in the utmost good faith by successful merchants and others, who thought that they had, like a former Duke of Newcastle, a right to do what they liked with their own and with what, morally at least, was not their own. The new proprietors acted on commercial considerations. They were generally less indulgent to the tenants than the old owners. They considered that all they had legally bought they had a right to sell. Even when they did not thus dispose of the tenants' interest, they believed that they had a right to limit it, to prescribe terms which the occupiers regarded as confiscation.

The late Sir Thomas M'Clure, of whom much will afterwards be said, was a merchant. Having recently bought the estate of Belmont, near Belfast, he became a very improving landlord, and, as Lord Dufferin publicly stated, had shown the older landlords how to profitably manage their property. He was a man incapable of doing an intentional injustice to any one. But after he had come into possession of the estate, and was what is called "setting it," that is, disposing of the land in building leases, one of the tenants, a solicitor, who built a large house and in other ways greatly improved the farm, objected to some of the conditions the then Mr. M'Clure sought to impose. Both were Presbyterians; both were Liberals; both took a deep interest in the politics of the time. But there was between them a long altercation. Mr. M'Clure, in his hesitating and somewhat querulous manner, said:

"Well — well — well; remember you have no security, no legal security."

"I know that very well."

"I could turn you out, and—and—and take your improvements—take your improvements."

"Do so by all means; you will never then have a chance of representing Belfast or any other Ulster constituency. I shall take care of that."

"Well—well—well."

The difference was of a very temporary nature, and was easily arranged. The gentleman, who still resides in the house he built, was afterwards one of Mr. M'Clure's most active supporters in Belfast. The fact, however, that such a threat could be held out by a just man, a Liberal, and to one who was able to resent it, shows as plainly as anything can do the evil of the system which thus prevailed.

It was in this year, 1867, that the *Times* sent a special Commissioner, Mr. W. O'Connor Morris, an Irish barrister now a County Court Judge, to make special inquiries into the much vexed land question. As a result of his investigations, Mr. Morris contributed a series of letters which were interesting and valuable. Mr. F. D. Finlay and I accompanied him to a meeting of tenant farmers at Ballyclare, a thriving town on the Six-Mile-Water, in the county of Antrim, about seven miles from Belfast. There was a large and interesting meeting. It was somewhat painful and humiliating to listen to the appeals made to this gentleman. The tenant farmers, some of them highly intelligent and nominally independent men, could,

they said, do very little for themselves. They recognised the *Times* Commissioner as a friend who could bring their grievances home to the British public, through the medium of that great newspaper with which he was at the time connected. "Help us," they said; "try to do something for us."

Their great grievance was that the tenant right was entirely unprotected by the law. They were thus, they said, and truly said, discouraged from making the improvements they might otherwise carry out, and would be glad to do. If they were to do all they could to effect improvements without any security of tenure, they might, at least when an estate changed hands, or on the change of an agent, find that they had only been improving another person's property, and had no legal claim for compensation. This, however, did not appear to them to be the worst. Their tenant right, and their improvements might not be directly taken from them; few of the old Ulster landlords would venture on such a high-handed proceeding. But the value of tenant right, and all the result of the tenants' industry, could be indirectly destroyed by what was called the silent system of raising the rents. One farmer told a story of a slovenly neighbour who had been advised to have his house and farm buildings whitewashed. "Whitewash my house!" he said. "Do you think I am a fool? If I did, I should have my rent raised."

There was a general laugh. But even in what seemed so ludicrous there was something pathetic.

The whole land question, as it was then recognised, merged into this matter of rent-raising. At a conference preliminary to one of the tenant right meetings which were beginning to be held all over Ulster, one of the most trusted advocates of the farmers said: "Everything depends on what rent the tenant ought to pay. This is the Irish land question in a nutshell."

There were general disquietude and anxiety. After the meeting at Ballyclare Mr. O'Connor Morris said to me: "Does it not strike you that the present state of things in Ireland with regard to land tenure resembles very much the condition in which the farmers and peasants in France were just before the great Revolution?" This was true. Between the Irish landlords and their tenants there was a wide and deep chasm which seemed daily extending. The Irish landlords, who have often been unfairly denounced, represented a bad system. Personally, indeed, they were certainly not worse than other men. They were not worse than their tenants and their champions would in similar circumstances have been. It was according to human nature that they should take advantage of the position in which they found themselves, and stand by the privileges they had inherited. A lady, the member of a noble family in Tyrone, heard her son, in my presence, admitting that some reforms, especially in the matter of leases, might be desirable. She turned round quite indignantly, and asked, "What are Ireland's wrongs now?"

Poor Ireland! In the circle where the spirit of the old ascendency still lingered the country was not supposed to have any wrongs. But this was not the general opinion.

In the autumn of the year 1867, while the minds of most thoughtful politicians were brooding on the Irish problem, the Social Science Congress held their annual meeting in Belfast. A large number of distinguished visitors made their appearance, and were very hospitably entertained by many families. Lord Dufferin was the President. He delivered a comprehensive address especially devoted to the Irish problem. This he referred to under three heads: the land question, which he had recently discussed in the columns of the *Times*; the education question; and the Church question. On them all he spoke thoughtfully, gracefully, and eloquently. By the audience generally the address was much admired. But it greatly annoyed Sir Thomas Bateson, the late Lord Deramore, then the member for Devizes, who had been a Conservative Whip, and a very strong Conservative politician. He had invited a number of guests during the meeting of the Social Science Congress to his family mansion, two miles from Belfast, on the right bank of the river Lagan, where it is most picturesque. From much that Lord Dufferin, as President at the introductory meeting in the Ulster Hall, said on the land question Sir Thomas did not, he could not, dissent. On the education question, though many of the Ulster Conservatives were slow in giving their approbation to

the national system until they found that its non-sectarian character was not regarded with favour by the Irish Catholic bishops, Sir Thomas Bateson may have felt himself in general accord with Lord Dufferin. But the references to the Irish State Church were heard with great indignation by Sir Thomas, his party, and several Orange clergymen. As sentence after sentence followed there were signs of dissent. At last Lord Dufferin declared that he regarded "the Irish Church to be one of the greatest blots that ever disgraced the Constitution of a free people." This was too much for the patience of Sir Thomas Bateson and his guests. The baronet, followed by his friends, unceremoniously marched out of the Hall, leaving the President to conclude his very thoughtful and plain-spoken address.

There was a great hubbub. The Ulster Conservative newspapers and the Ulster Conservative gentlemen were loud in their denunciations of Lord Dufferin, for, as they said, introducing politics into a Social Science Congress. Lord Brougham, who had been unable to attend the meeting, and was but the shadow of his former self, had written a letter in which there was a great deal of politics. But no allowance was made for Lord Dufferin. Forgetting all that he had recently written in favour of the Irish landlords, it was asked, "What better could be expected from such a Radical?"

Before the Congress closed there was the President's dinner in the Ulster Hall. The supporters of Sir Thomas Bateson's policy would not attend them-

selves, and did their best to prevent others from attending. But their efforts to cause the banquet to be a failure did not succeed. When they became aware of the attempts being made to prevent the Conservatives from going to the entertainment, the Ulster Liberals, who among the more respectable classes were very numerous and influential, eagerly applied for tickets, and they were soon all bought up. There were some four hundred applications for seats, more than the large hall could accommodate. One of the most interesting features, too, was the presence of ladies, not merely to look on from the galleries while the gentlemen were feasting below, but at the tables in the body of the hall as ticket holders themselves. This was then regarded as a great though graceful innovation. In his speech, Lord Dufferin stated that when he was requested by the Association to be the President to the Belfast meeting, he considered that on Irish ground it was not inappropriate in him to speak out what he strongly felt on Irish questions, and that, had he not thought himself free to express his convictions on them, he would not have accepted the position at all. The members of the Congress, for the most part, and, of course, the Ulster Liberals, were on Lord Dufferin's side. After the dinner was over, and the proceedings of the Congress came to an end, the more moderate Conservatives regretted that Sir Thomas Bateson had given the signal for discord. It was observed with some surprise that at a ball not long afterwards of Sir Thomas and

Lady Bateson, Lord and Lady Dufferin's names appeared among those of the invited guests.

The blow had been struck. The language the noble President of the Social Science Congress in Belfast had used respecting the position of the Irish State Church, or, as its supporters called it, the branch of the English State Church established in Ireland, gave a powerful stimulus to the agitation then going on for the removal of this anomaly. A year and a half afterwards, when this struggle for the disestablishment of the Irish Church was virtually won, at a meeting in the rooms of the Ulster Liberal Association where Lord Dufferin presided, for the presentation of a testimonial, which too indulgent friends thought that I had deserved, one of the representative Ulster Liberals, the late William Dunville, J.P., said: "With regard to that question which is occupying so much attention at the present moment, it was my Lord Dufferin who sounded the first great note concerning it (hear, hear), at the meeting of the Social Science Congress in this town (applause). That note has resounded over the whole country, and has been the means of bringing together the Liberal party not only Imperially as Mr. Macknight has said, but locally. Such a debt of gratitude is not easily expressed." [1]

It was an exciting time. The Ulster Liberals, though quite conscious of being in a minority, were

[1] *Northern Whig*, May 27th, 1869, and *Belfast News Letter* of the same date

full of hope and confidence, full of public spirit and genuine patriotism. To establish the principle of religious equality in Ireland, either by endowment or disendowment, or, as it was said, by levelling up or levelling down, had ever since the time of Lord Grey's great administration been regarded as a thoroughly Liberal policy. To that policy the Ulster Liberals steadily adhered. On the course Mr. Gladstone marked out they advanced with assured steps. For a time the land question was left in the background. The efforts to carry out a policy of disestablishment in Ulster, and in the very centre and hot-bed of Orangeism, may be considered to have an especial interest. The incidents of that struggle, so far as they bear on the far greater and more formidable question of Home Rule, may now be related.

CHAPTER VII

1867—1868

First Hillsborough Demonstration in favour of the Irish Church —Visit of the Marquis of Abercorn as Lord Lieutenant— Lord Russell in Belfast—A Note of Discord—John Rea— Omission to invite Lord Russell to the Mayor's Banquet—A Reforming Protestant Bishop—Second Hillsborough Meeting —Dr. Cooke—Lord Roden—No Message of Peace—Rev. Dr. Rogers—Meeting of the Irish General Assembly on the Church Question—Position of the Liberal Party in Belfast— Indications of a Coming Change.

IRISH disestablishment was casting its shadow before. Very soon after Lord Dufferin's declaration against the State Church at the Social Science Congress its Ulster supporters determined to make a great demonstration in its favour at Hillsborough. This town has in immediate proximity to it the seat of the Marquis of Downshire and the old ruins of Hillsborough Castle. The Orangemen and their sympathisers still mention with pride that King William III. slept in the Castle on his march to the Boyne, and that in looking out on the undulating and picturesque scenery all round, he said, or was reported to have said, that "it is a country worth fighting for."

However this may have been, it was thought the best place for holding a great meeting in support of the Church Establishment. The reason for the selection of the spot was that thirty-three years previously, on the 30th of October, 1834, a very influential gathering of the same character was held there with the Marquis of Downshire as chairman. It was subsequent to the session of Parliament in that year when the celebrated resolution had been proposed to the effect that, the possessions of the Irish Church exceeding the wants of the population, the surplus ought to be distributed as the State might direct. A commission of inquiry had also been advocated. But Lord Grey's Government were divided on the question. Lord Althorp, the leader of the House of Commons, sent in his resignation; this was followed by Lord Grey's own. Lord Melbourne became Prime Minister only to be suddenly dismissed. Sir Robert Peel then formed a new Conservative administration, having been, as Mr. Disraeli afterwards wrote, "called from Rome to govern England."

The great Hillsborough demonstration that autumn was most successful. It was then that the Rev. Dr. Cooke, as a Presbyterian, proclaimed the banns of marriage between the Irish State Church and the Irish Presbyterian, and there was great exultation at the announcement. Dr. Cooke was regarded as a Presbyterian Conservative leader. He was a not inconsiderable gainer by this partisanship. Among the Orangemen and the Tories he was always after-

wards received with enthusiasm. It was assumed that the Hillsborough meeting at that time had saved the Established Church. As a fact it was in the following session, a few months afterwards, that Lord John Russell proposed and carried several resolutions hostile to the revenues of the Establishment, and embodying what was known as the Appropriation Clause. It was in the division on these resolutions that the new Conservative Ministry were defeated by majorities of twenty-five and twenty-seven, and had to give place to Lord Melbourne's Liberal administration, which virtually and practically continued in office for more than six years.

But the Ulster defenders of the Irish Church troubled themselves very little with historical facts. They appealed to sectarian and political prejudices. They were confident that the new Hillsborough demonstration would rival the old one, and postpone the question of disestablishment, as it was assumed the former had done, for more than another generation.

While they were making their preparations the Lord Lieutenant, the Marquis of Abercorn, paid an official visit to Belfast. In his speech as President at the dinner of the Social Science Congress, Lord Dufferin with his characteristic tact and grace had bespoken for the representative of the Sovereign an enthusiastic reception. This at the time, even among the Conservatives and Orangemen, was not regarded as at all a matter of course. The Lord Lieutenant and his secretary, who had become Lord Mayo, were

supposed to have shown certain Liberal sympathies. One of the Dublin Conservative newspapers had persistently singled out Lord Mayo for attack, and other Irish Conservative newspapers had been not indisposed to follow that example. Certain prosecutions which the Government had instituted for breaches of the Party Processions Act, on which much will afterwards have to be said, had deeply offended the Orangemen. There was an attempt made however to draw a distinction between the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary: to maintain that the Lord Lieutenant disapproved of the prosecutions, and that they were all the work of Lord Mayo.

On the day of his Excellency's arrival in Belfast, it was remarked that the High Street and Donegall Place, the two principal streets, were gaily decorated. The shops and warehouses of well-known Liberals were conspicuous for their display of flags and bunting.

Only a single note of discord was sounded, but this was a remarkable one. The Lord Lieutenant was accompanied to Belfast by no less a person than Lord Russell, the late Prime Minister, the Lord John Russell whose name was so long a household word with all good Liberals in the United Kingdom. Lord Russell's appearance in the train of a Conservative Lord Lieutenant was something like a phenomenon. Orangemen, and even mere Conservatives, when it was known that Lord Russell was coming to Belfast from Baronscourt with the Marquis of Abercorn, were greatly perplexed. They scarcely knew what to do, or what to think.

On the day of the arrival an orange placard covered the dead walls, calling on the people not to give Lord Russell a welcome, which he was, it was said, evidently anxious to share with the Conservative Lord Lieutenant. It was implied that he ought not to receive popular honours, to which as a Whig he had no right. The placard was very disgraceful. It was not unlikely to provoke a breach of the peace in a very inflammable town.

Lord Russell took, however, no part in the popular reception of the Lord Lieutenant. He drove quietly to the Royal Hotel at the corner of Donegall Place. This was a building which had been the town house of the Marquis of Donegall as distinguished from his country house, in the Ormeau Park. The Marquis formerly returned the members for Belfast. A friend called upon him one day and was told that he would be down soon, as he was only upstairs making a Member of Parliament.

The orange placard was flaming on the dead walls. There was no saying what might not occur from such a brutal appeal to the worst sectarian and political passions. It was suggested to me that under the circumstances I ought to call on Lord Russell and explain to him, for the credit of the town, that the people generally had no sympathy with this savage document.

I received a very cordial welcome from the aged statesman. He had with him Lady Russell and a daughter. I had not seen Lord Russell for several years; but his appearance had undergone

very little if any change. His hair still had something of iron grey: he was not at all feeble. Little more than a year afterwards he declined becoming a member of Mr. Gladstone's first administration on the ground of his advanced age; but as he sat before me in the room of the Royal Hotel he showed no indications of a loss of intellectual nor of physical vigour. An aged oak, if the upper branches decay, sometimes throws out vigorous shoots from the trunk, just above the roots where it is in contact with the earth. Thus Lord Russell then appeared. He was evidently somewhat annoyed at the placard which he had seen. "It never occurred to me," he said, "that any one could take offence at my coming to Belfast in the train with the Lord Lieutenant, whose guest I have been. You know," he added, looking at Lady Russell, "we are relatives." "Yes," said her ladyship; "we are also here quite in a private capacity."

"Of course." Lord Russell continued: "I am going through Belfast to spend a few days with Lord Dufferin. This is our reason for coming." I said that the placard was scarcely worth noticing, though it was undoubtedly intended to have a mischievous effect.

"I have been," observed Lord Russell, "in the South and West of Ireland. The Church question excites great interest. I am told that there is to be a great meeting upon it here."

"There is to be on the 30th of this month at Hillsborough. It is to be a meeting in imitation

of one held on the same day and at the same place in 1834. The Orangemen are told that the Hillsborough meeting then prevented your appropriation policy from being carried out."

Lord Russell smiled and said, "It had no effect upon it at all. The Presbyterians generally in the North of Ireland were very Liberal. I am told that Dr. Cooke has made them, however, Conservative."

"Some of them: but after all not so many as you may think. There are six hundred Presbyterian ministers in Ireland, and the large majority have Liberal sympathies."

"Are they in favour of the disestablishment of the Church?"

'Many of them, I think, are."

"Would they approve of an endowment of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, and an increased *Regium Donum?*"

"You mean increased endowment or levelling up, the policy Lord Mayo is represented as favouring?"

"Partly."

"I do not think that the Presbyterians, or the Liberals generally in the North of Ireland, would support this policy."

"What would they prefer?"

"General disendowment with disestablishment."

"Have you seen what I have written to Mr. Fortescue on this subject?"

"I have."

"Do you agree with it?"

"The Catholic Bishops are opposed to this policy. They would not now receive an endowment for their Church."

"But in the South of Ireland I have found the priests, and especially the poorer Catholic clergy, willing to receive an endowment from the State."

"This was the policy which Burke, who knew Ireland so well, was disposed to favour when he recommended the establishment of the Maynooth College."

"If the Catholic clergy wish it, surely it might be practicable."

"The Catholic clergy in Ireland, in my humble opinion, could not and would not accept an endowment in opposition to their Bishops."

"Well," added Lord Russell, "something will have to be done; that is very clear."

Lord Russell's plan was, as he afterwards repeated in his "Second letter to the Right Hon. Chichester Fortescue," to divide the rent charges among the clergy —Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Presbyterian— according to their numbers.[1] Lord Russell had, however, soon to admit that his proposal could not be carried. He acknowledged his error. When I left him in the Royal Hotel, I was surprised, and indeed somewhat mortified, that a statesman who had been twice Prime Minister, and a Liberal leader in the

[1] See A Letter to the Right Hon. Chichester Fortescue, M.P., on the state of Ireland, by Lord Russell; also the second Letter, published in 1868.

House of Commons for many years, did not see that the Catholic Bishops would in those days not allow their priests to become mere stipendiaries of the State. The words attributed to the Swedish Chancellor Oxenstern occurred to me: "Knowest thou not, my son, with how little wisdom the world is governed?"

The orange placard directed against Lord Russell I have good reason for believing not to have been issued by any member of the Orange Society. It was the production of a man well known in Belfast at that time and for many years afterwards. His name was John Rea. He had been a member of the Young Ireland Confederacy, had suffered imprisonment for the cause, and during that time acquired a knowledge of law, which enabled him afterwards to qualify himself and to practise as a solicitor in Belfast. He had been the relator in the Chancery suit which caused so much bitter feeling in the town, and for a time seriously interfered with municipal improvement. Before the Committee of the House of Lords on this business he displayed so much passion that on one occasion, by the order of Earl Grey, he was carried out by policemen, kicking violently. He afterwards boasted of this and other similar achievements, which became his favourite resources when not allowed to have his own way. On his passions being roused he was utterly destitute of self-control. His face, with its big jaw and enormous mouth, was a study. He could roar almost like a mad bull. He never forgave the Liberals of the town for coming to a compromise

on the Chancery suit. Always hopelessly impracticable, he could do no good to any cause, and, like the elephant in the battle, was likely to be more dangerous to his friends than to his foes.

It is related in the *Life of John Mitchel* that very early Rea began to display his restlessness, his want of all foresight and restraint. When it was proposed to hold a meeting of the Confederation of Young Ireland, so early as 1847, it was found that he was quite unmanageable. It is said: "Among other things the over-zeal of the new recruit John Rea came near to overturning the whole project."[1] Thus it ever was. John Rea had no regard for the feelings of others. He delighted in giving pain. He alienated nearly all who had been his friends, with the exception of the late Mr. Joseph G. Biggar, M.P., who with characteristic eccentricity stood by him to the last. Rea was in fact the great obstructor at public meetings and at other assemblies, whenever they were held by his old Liberal friends. He might justly be called the originator of obstruction. But John Rea was mad. He at last committed suicide. His medical adviser, in giving evidence at the inquest, admitted that he had long regarded him as insane.

The issuing of this orange placard at the time of Lord Russell's visit was in itself an act of madness. No person but Rea could have imagined that Lord Russell wished to share in the reception of the Lord Lieutenant. The old leader of the Liberal party

[1] With respect to John Rea, see the *Life of John Mitchel*, by William Dillon, vol. i. pp. 164 and 170.

went down to Lord Dufferin's in the afternoon, and he was seen no more. He remained some three days at Clandeboye, but he saw no person beyond Lord Dufferin and his family. A letter was sent to him on the part of some representative Liberals, requesting him to meet them in a conference on the important Irish questions which were expected to assume such prominence in the following session. Lord Russell replied, however, somewhat coldly, addressing his letter to the future member for Belfast, and baronet, as "Mr. M'Clure." But the veteran statesman was at the time somewhat indisposed.

The Lord Lieutenant was entertained by the Harbour Commissioners at a luncheon, and afterwards by the Mayor at a public dinner. At the dinner Lord Dufferin was present; but Lord Russell was not invited. As the steamer provided for the conveyance of the Lord Lieutenant and the other guests of the Harbour Commissioners proceeded on an excursion down the Lough, much was said about Lord Russell's visit and the placard. The Mayor, a very kindly gentleman, and though a Conservative, not at all an extreme politician, was asked if he had invited Lord Russell to the public dinner to be given to the Queen's representative. The answer was a very decided negative. The Mayor evidently regarded the question as trenching on delicate ground. "Lord Russell," said one prominent member of the Belfast Town Council, "is too much a Radical." But it was suggested: "Lord Russell is Lord Dufferin's guest, and he is invited." "Oh,"

added the Mayor, "there will be noblemen present at the dinner superior to Lord Russell." It was asked, "In what way superior? Will there be present any other nobleman who has been the leader of a great party for a generation, and has been twice Prime Minister?" To this there was no reply. It was evidently thought that a local marquis was superior to an earl, though that earl was Lord Russell. At the dinner the noble guests of the Mayor advanced up the hall to the principal table according to their titular rank. Lord Dufferin, being then only a baron, was among the last. He was, however, beyond all doubt the most distinguished nobleman then present: between him and any other there was no comparison. But as a Liberal, by many of the Ulster Conservatives he was regarded with almost as much suspicion as Lord Russell himself.

The Lord Lieutenant, well pleased with his reception, took his departure from Belfast. A few days afterwards the meeting at Hillsborough was to be held, and in anticipation of it a vigorous controversy was carried on. The Committee in charge of the proceedings issued earnest appeals to the Protestant Churches in favour of "our endowments." It was recognised that the Presbyterians held the key of the position, and that if they stood, as so many of them had done at the former Hillsborough meeting, by the cause of the Establishment, that institution which Mr. Sheil in the House of Commons had called, if not venerable, at least hoary, might be saved. Their

clergy were exhorted to rally round the State Church, because if it were disestablished and disendowed, the *Regium Donum* would also be taken away.

At this time Dr. Knox was the Protestant Bishop of the united diocese of Down, Connor, and Dromore. He had during the last session been one of the Irish Bishops in the House of Lords, and there, as in other places, he had maintained that a great reform in the temporalities of the Irish State Church might be made. He was indeed a Church reformer. As an illustration of the system which the Bishop at the time wished to reform, a remarkable instance may be given. While the controversy on the question of disestablishment and disendowment was raging, one Sunday, in what was called boastingly the great Protestant county of Down, and in the very cathedral of St. Patrick, no clergyman was ready to perform divine service. Where Protestants were so numerous, only fifty pounds annually was granted to the officiating clergymen. In St. Patrick's, Christ Church, Dublin, and Cashel there were endowed cathedral dignities; but the Downpatrick Cathedral, with St. Patrick's reputed grave in the churchyard, very badly kept, had no endowment. The Bishop could do nothing to remove this scandal; neither could the Dean and Chapter, nor the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. At the meeting of the Social Science Congress in Belfast the Bishop had moved the vote of thanks to Lord Dufferin, without protesting against the words he had used about the Establishment. He had also refused to postpone the Diocesan

Conference in anticipation of the Hillsborough meeting. These were unpardonable sins in the eyes of the Tory clergy, some seventy-five of whom presented him with a grave remonstrance. He was unequivocally declared to be unfaithful to the Church of which he was a representative Bishop. How unjust this language was appeared when, after the disestablishment, this kindly and conciliatory prelate was elected Primate.

The great day from which so much was professedly expected arrived. The three railways round Belfast ran special trains. Nothing was omitted to raise sectarian enthusiasm. But a change had come over the spirit of the dream. This second Hillsborough meeting, notwithstanding the assertions of the Irish Conservative Press, was a failure. Instead of 40,000 people being present, speaking as an eye-witness, I may state, as was done at the time, that there were about 4,000 persons round the platform, and perhaps some 2,000 more scattered through the little town. To keep the audience together Lord Downshire, who presided, the big marquis as he was called, announced publicly from the chair that all the drink in Hillsborough was consumed. This was to a stranger sufficiently ludicrous information, when contrasted with the object of the gathering, a great Protestant demonstration in favour of the State Church.

To those who like the marquis himself had taken an active part in the former Hillsborough demonstration, the comparative smallness of the numbers

present was painfully evident. The blank face of Lord Downshire testified eloquently to this fact. At the former meeting railways were unknown. Belfast at that time had not more than forty thousand inhabitants. At the second Hillsborough demonstration Belfast had at least a hundred and sixty thousand. But on this occasion the Ulster Railway only issued 1,665 tickets to Hillsborough. This fact is decisive.

There was from first to last a want of spirit about the proceedings. The Orangemen had been directed to refrain from marching in procession, to show no emblems, to play no party tunes. They did their best to comply with this request from those in whom they had confidence. But it was not what they had been accustomed to; there was the bread, but without the gin. Mr. Johnston of Ballykilbeg, then regarded as a rather obscure and eccentric country gentleman, fanatically devoted to Orangeism, was observed to walk about the platform in a somewhat discontented and even angry mood. He did not speak, nor was he asked to speak. A hint was thrown out by the noble chairman that no subjects were to be introduced except those which had been arranged by the organisers of the meeting, and that if any attempt were made to violate the rule, some decisive measure might be adopted against its author. The remark, it was whispered, was intended for Mr. Johnston himself; it certainly appeared to make him more uncomfortable. His eyes glared: but he remained silent. To those who did not know what was then passing

behind the scenes there seemed something mysterious in the attitude of the marquis and of Mr. Johnston towards one another.

The speaking generally was moderate. The Rev. Dr. Cooke, who in all the vigour of his manhood had, as has been stated, proclaimed at the former meeting the banns of marriage between the two great Irish Protestant Churches, now appeared but the shadow of his former self. He was a feeble old man bending under the weight of his years. His speech was an indistinct muttering, of which all that could be heard was some words of apology for his presence on the platform at all. "I am consistent—consistent—consistent," he repeated. Dr. Cooke had always been more of a politician than a divine. He held a professorship in the Presbyterian College, the distributorship of the *Regium Donum*, and in some way or another, even against a recognised rule, the income from the May Street Presbyterian Church of which he was still regarded as the pastor. The exertion he made by being present and speaking at this second Hillsborough meeting was too much for his strength. A short time after he had resumed his seat he was carried from the platform and through the crowd in an exhausted and helpless state.

Another aged man, perhaps more distinguished in his way than Dr. Cooke, was also borne out in a similar condition. This was Lord Roden, who had taken an active part in Tory and Orange demonstrations in 1834, and who had been dismissed from the magistracy, with other persons of position, for the part

they had taken in what was called the Dolly's Brae affair, when the Catholics who were called Ribbonmen came into collision with the Orangemen, who on the 12th of July would insist on marching through the pass where thirty-four years before a Catholic had been killed by an Orangeman. The mother of the Catholic left a dying injunction to her relatives and friends never to permit an Orange procession to go through that way. Hence "Dolly's Brae." Lord Roden, just when the Orange Society had been revived, indirectly invited the Orangemen of the neighbourhood to come to Tollymore Park, near Castlewellan, on the twelfth. He gave them refreshments. It was on their return by Dolly's Brae, two miles distant, that a conflict occurred between the two armed parties, who exchanged volleys with each other. Cottages were fired, and several lives lost: one that of a poor idiot, and another that of a helpless old woman. Dolly's Brae was then on everybody's lips. Brae is a slope, a hill, but Lady Palmerston, who was a relative of Lord Roden, asked her lord who Dolly Brae was. "Oh, my dear," replied Lord Palmerston, "some very disreputable person, no doubt." Lord Clarendon, as Lord Lieutenant, appeared in the House of Lords to defend himself against Lord Derby for the part he had taken in dismissing Lord Roden from the magistracy. The *Times* not unreasonably remarked that if Her Majesty's representative in Ireland had to throw aside his viceregal dignity and defend himself personally against party opponents in the House of Lords, it would be better to

get rid of the Lord Lieutenancy at once and for ever.

Just at that time the extreme party of Young Ireland were preparing for action. John Mitchel's advice to pour vitriol on the heads of the Queen's troops in Dublin seemed to English people like the ravings of a lunatic. The Orange spirit was powerfully invoked in the opposite direction, just as it had been when the Society was first formed in 1795 in anticipation of the rebellion of '98. There were then faults on both sides; the party bitterness, the savage ferocity could scarcely be exceeded. Lord Roden, weak and ill as he seemed at this Hillsborough demonstration, continued until he died, three years afterwards, to be regarded by the Tories and Orangemen of the North of Ireland, and especially of Belfast and of his county of Down, as an Orange hero and martyr. When he drove in his carriage between Newcastle and Downpatrick, he was loudly cheered by the enthusiastic Protestants who met him on the road. His name to those who had little sympathy with the cause he asserted carried with it no pacific associations, no message of peace. Yet he was eminently a religious man, a pious nobleman. Visitors from the pleasant watering place of Newcastle, a short walk from his seat at Tollymore Park, had the privilege on Sunday summer evenings of attending the service in his private chapel, and hearing him with great devotion and at last with faltering voice read the prayers. This seemed a strange contrast to some of those who

had heard and read of Dolly's Brae, and Lord Roden's dismissal. Amid the beautiful scenery, amid all the tranquil associations of a Sunday evening, Lord Roden's voice seemed to go up to Heaven as that of a thoroughly good and Christian peer. He thus exhibited in his own person, in his own words and deeds, what then was, and what to a modified extent still is, one of the strange anomalies in Ireland.

When the Hillsborough meeting broke up and the Orangemen and their friends left the ground on that fine autumn afternoon, the sound of their fifes and drums began to be heard. They felt themselves no longer under restraint. The past and the present seemed strangely brought together by the appearance of what were irreverently called the Beefeaters at the Castle gates, still retained under an especial grant, in their red coats and large black hats after the fashion of those seen on ceremonial occasions at Buckingham and St. James's Palaces. Hillsborough Castle had been appointed a Royal Fortress long before King William slept there, and the hereditary Constableship, with the guard in their picturesque and venerable costumes, was still retained. But this was no longer a reality, it was but a symbol of the past. The Church Establishment, notwithstanding the two Hillsborough meetings and all the efforts being so energetically made to maintain it, was soon also to be of the past and not of the present; but the Church itself, even by what was assumed to be a great calamity, was to gain a new and independent life.

During the session of Parliament in 1868, the

struggle was continued both in and out of the House of Commons. It is not necessary here to dwell on Mr. Gladstone's resolutions and the Suspensory Bill, except as they were regarded in Ireland, and especially in Ulster. Every effort was made to keep the Presbyterians on the side of the Establishment. In the House of Commons it was resolved that the *Regium Donum* and the Maynooth Grant were to cease with the State Church. Deputation after deputation, asking for an increase of this *Regium Donum*, had been going over to London year after year appointed by one section of the Irish General Assembly, led by the Rev. John Rogers, who had recently been Moderator, and who had for years been regarded as a Liberal opponent of Dr. Cooke. He had sought interviews with Liberal statesmen on the strength of his Liberalism. It was he and his friends who in the presence of Mr. Bright had boasted of their pronounced and even aggressive Liberalism and of their political influence, and who had been met with the question: "Well, gentlemen, you talk of your influence: how many members can you return?"

They did not, as Liberals, return one. The Rev. John Rogers, who then took a prominent part in Ulster politics, and who had been a strong tenant-right advocate, disappointed at the refusal of the Liberal leaders to adopt a reactionary policy of increased religious endowment in Ireland, as contrary to the spirit of the age, became practically a Conservative and even a Tory. He had much

sense of humour and considerable cleverness; he might indeed be considered an ecclesiastical John Rea, whose sympathies also had become more Conservative than Liberal. He had the same tendency to acrimonious personalities, and to very unjust representations of his political opponents. But Rea was not a clergyman: he was scarcely responsible for many of his actions. The Rev. John Rogers was a clergyman, and he was not mad. The worldly tone, the jealous depreciation, the not very refined jokes of this reverend Presbyterian leader, shocked one who had like myself from his King's College days known and loved that noble representative of the Broad Church, with so much truly Catholic charity, the Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice.

As the time for the meeting of the Irish General Assembly approached in the early summer of 1868, no effort was spared to get the Reverend Court committed to the side of the Establishment. The Suspensory Bill had been read a second time in the House of Commons; it was certain, indeed, to be rejected by the House of Lords, but the Conservative Ministers, being in a minority of 58 on the measure, had no alternative but to appeal to the constituencies in the autumn. A resolution of the Irish General Assembly in favour of the principle of Establishment was proposed. There was a very exciting debate, which continued for three days. At last the resolution was affirmed; but only by a majority of thirty. 210 supported it and two other resolutions: 180 voted in the negative. Instead of

this being, as was represented, a victory to the supporters of the Irish State Church, it was virtually a defeat. Again and again it was pointed out that a declaration of the General Assembly in favour of the principle of Establishment, a phrase which was bandied about from side to side, did not commit the members of the Presbyterian Court to the principle of a Protestant Episcopal Establishment, to which Presbyterians on their principle of Establishment were and must be opposed. It was against, too, the policy on which the Irish General Assembly had acted with respect to the Free Church of Scotland, for which the majority had often expressed the utmost sympathy. One of the ablest members of the majority who voted for the principle of Establishment was Professor Smyth of the Magee College, Derry. He was subsequently chosen Moderator, and afterwards one of the Liberal members of Parliament for his county. He said in the plainest words, in support of the most important of the resolutions, that if it were intended to bolster up the existing Irish Established Church, he for one would give his vote against this very principle of Establishment. A number of members who also supported it said the same thing. One of the most remarkable features of the division was the large body of elders who were on the side of the minority. It showed that, notwithstanding Dr. Cooke's influence, the Irish Presbyterians were again becoming Liberalised. Dr. Smyth afterwards said that he and those who with him, though known to be Liberals, voted for the resolutions, met with a very

indifferent reception when they returned to the city of Londonderry. They were reproached with allowing themselves to be hoodwinked into giving a vote which was inconsistent with their Liberal professions, and which was, as they might have known it would be, misinterpreted and misrepresented. Dr. Smyth was not physically strong; he always walked lamely. He was bright, earnest, energetic, a sound Liberal of the Ulster type, a frank and sympathetic man. He too has passed away.

The Liberals of Belfast at this time seemed to occupy a less enviable position than their brethren in the Maiden City. In Londonderry a Liberal had at a recent election been returned. The victory indeed had afterwards been reversed; but still for the time it was a victory, and broke the proud record of the Ulster Conservatives, with their boast, "We are twenty-nine." In Belfast it was different. It was many a year since the town had returned a Liberal member. It may be truly said that the Belfast Liberals still continued since their defeat three years previously to be very disheartened. As the struggle against the State Church proceeded and seemed to be reaching its climax, a number of Liberal gentlemen of the town met one evening in what was called the Athenæum, to consider the question and to see if they could not do something to aid the cause asserted so ably by Mr. Gladstone and his followers in Parliament. This Athenæum was indeed a very poor affair. It had been set up by a local bookseller for the reading of magazines and newspapers by his subscribers;

it was altogether a private undertaking and could not be regarded as an institution of the town. The Liberal gentlemen who met in the large upper room seemed conscious of their comparative political insignificance. They were nervously afraid of having reporters present from hostile newspapers. The cry was "Keep out the *News Letter*." At that time the Conservative newspapers in Ulster, like the Orange clergymen, seemed to assail Liberals with a scurrilous violence which could scarcely have been exceeded. They represented the majority, and, conscious of their strength, hardly pretended to keep on terms of ordinary courtesy with their opponents; but in Belfast the Liberals who met in the Athenæum were, like most of those who professed Liberal politics, among the first gentlemen, merchants, and manufacturers of the town. "Keep out the *News Letter*" seemed a humiliating cry, as indeed it was, to Liberals who had the courage of their convictions. Those intelligent men, thus meeting almost in secret in an upper room over a shop, appeared like the conspirators who came to Brutus in the dark night amid the thunder and lightning. The Shakesperian lines were recalled to the mind of one gentleman who was present:

> O Conspiracy,
> Sham'st thou to show thy dangerous brow by night,
> When evils are most free? O, then by day,
> Where wilt thou find a cavern dark enough
> To mask thy monstrous visage?

The question of disestablishment was discussed.

Any policy of concurrent endowment, to which the Irish Chief Secretary, Lord Mayo, had committed himself and the Conservative Government, then evidently tottering to its fall, was strongly condemned. It was recommended to draw up a declaration on this subject. One very earnest politician, and a good Liberal, whose grandfather had been a United Irishman, and was said to have been at the battle of Ballynahinch in '98, said, "Well, gentlemen, you can now draw up any resolution you please, but I feel so strongly the injustice of maintaining the Irish State Church, that if I were a Catholic I should be a Fenian."

This was generally thought to be extreme language, and was heard in silence. But all present approved of Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy and were not disinclined to make for it great sacrifices. The Liberals present felt themselves more or less isolated; but they were thoroughly true to Liberal principles. Most of them were hereditary Liberals. They all regretted that their party in the town was in apparently such a hopeless position. They did not see that at the very time when they held this meeting in the tea-room of the Athenæum, there was a spirit at work which in a few months might give them the opportunity, for a time at least, of recovering from their political depression. They did not see that the time was only a few years distant when they would be able to hold their meetings in a very different building from this humble Athenæum: that the Ulster Reform Club, a handsome building, would be built in

the new Royal Avenue, and that they could there assemble and publicly discuss political questions without any dread of hostile reporters or of comment from hostile newspapers. From the towers of the club the Liberal flag would be thrown boldly to the winds, and be the open and visible sign of a common rallying ground for all Ulster Liberals. At this time there were no indications even of a party division in their ranks. It was among their Conservative opponents in Belfast and in some other Ulster constituencies that dissensions began to be manifest. How they arose and what consequences followed from them may now be seen. The narrative will be found not without instruction.

CHAPTER VIII

1868—1869.

Mr. Johnston and the Party Processions Act—Belfast Nationalists and the O'Connell Monument—Lord Mayo as Irish Chief Secretary—Lukewarmness of the Orangemen in the cause of the Established Church—Effect of the Execution of the Manchester Fenians—Mr. Johnston's Imprisonment—Proposed as a Candidate for Belfast—Marquis of Downshire—Approaching Election—Sir Charles Lanyon—Mr. John Mulholland—Revolt of the Orangemen—Mr. Thomas M'Clure—"Vote for Vote"—The Contest in Belfast—The Day of Nomination—Return of Mr. Johnston and Mr. M'Clure—Moral Effect of the Victory—Mr. Gladstone's Declaration.

WHEN Mr. Johnston of Ballykilbeg, as the future member for Belfast was then perhaps not very euphoniously called, was observed to be pacing the platform at the Hillsborough meeting in a somewhat discontented mood, he had from his point of view great reason for that discontent. The Party Processions Act was enforced, and rigorously enforced, against the Orangemen. It was not, however, and perhaps could not be, similarly enforced against Fenian processions in Dublin, Limerick, and Cork. There were defenders of this apparent want of impartiality. They said, and the Catholic resident

magistrate in Belfast, Mr. O'Donnell, said, that processions which were declared on sworn informations to be likely to lead to riots could be prevented by the authorities; but that processions which were not provocative of disturbances could not be prevented. It followed from this interpretation of the law that a thoroughly disloyal procession in the streets of Dublin, Cork, or Limerick, where the poorer parts of the population were virtually unanimous, was represented as loyal, while an Orange procession, professedly loyal, in the streets of Belfast, or indeed in any part of Ulster where there was not similar unanimity, could be put down, and its organisers and all who took part in it prosecuted.

But there were action and reaction. The first Belfast riots, as has been said, were undoubtedly stimulated by the procession in Dublin to lay the foundation stone of the O'Connell monument. Then came the funeral procession of M'Manus the Fenian, whose remains had been brought from New York to Dublin, and other similar processions of a disloyal character in the South and West of Ireland. It can be easily understood that the Orangemen, still representing the party of ascendency, would not quietly submit to what they regarded as most unjust. To protest against what they considered as the one-sided administration of the Party Processions Act, by disregarding it and themselves marching in procession, became with them a passion. The law was publicly and frequently defied. To see respectable men, well-to-do farmers and others, placed in

the dock and sentenced to terms of imprisonment merely for marching publicly, as the Fenians and their sympathisers were permitted to do with impunity, was a sad and even a scandalous spectacle.

The result was that in the crisis of the struggle for the maintenance of the Irish State Church in Ireland the Orangemen became remarkably lukewarm. They thought a great deal more of what they considered to be the unfair administration of the Party Processions Act than of the doomed Church Establishment. Even when Mr. Gladstone's resolutions and the Suspensory Bill against that institution were before Parliament, as the great Orange anniversary of the 12th of July came round, it was very significant that most of the brethren said little and appeared to care little about the question. The clergy who took part in the July demonstrations were of course the principal exceptions, and they were supported in their denunciations of Mr. Gladstone and the Suspensory Bill by many of the landlords and their dependents. But the rank and file of the Orangemen, and especially those who resided in Belfast and its neighbourhood, began to show an independent spirit.

It is no just reproach to Lord Mayo, the Irish Chief Secretary, and his advisers that they did carry out the law against the Orangemen. But, wedded to official routine, they seemed to shut their eyes to the anomaly of this administration, and to the effect it was producing in Ulster. Their efforts, too, to buttress up the Established Church on what was called

the levelling-up system or the principle of concurrent endowment, though favoured by many public men from the time of Pitt downwards, and, as we have just seen, by Lord Russell, had a not dissimilar result. It alienated many zealous Protestants from the Church which had to be sustained by such means, and thus broke the power of resistance when the English Conservatives, with the principal Ministers at their head, sanguinely expected them all to maintain a united front.

As has been shown, it was seen at Hillsborough, it was seen at the celebrations of the 12th of July, that the Orangemen were, we repeat, becoming lukewarm in the cause they were thought to have so much at heart. In comparison with the liberty to walk in procession with fifes, drums, and banners, as the Fenians south of the Boyne were doing, they cared little for "our Protestant institutions" and for a professedly Conservative Government which they were expected as a matter of course to support. On the 12th of July, 1867, previous to the great struggle in the following year, Mr. Johnston and a large body of the Orangemen of Belfast and the county of Down had intentionally and deliberately set the Party Processions Act at defiance, by marching publicly to Bangor, the nearest seaside watering-place from Belfast, and just at the opening of the Belfast Lough into the sea. The hillside on which they held their meeting is now covered with handsome villas built by Belfast merchants. It was then, little more than a quarter of a century

ago, a bare open space, descending gradually to the shore.

Mr. Johnston's speech at the time was remarkable. It was not at all like the ordinary Orange and party speeches to which the 12th of July audiences had been accustomed. "We are not here," he said, "to do the work of any Government." The sentence was loudly applauded. Not long afterwards Mr. Johnston and some of his principal followers on that memorable day received a summons to appear in the Court House at Bangor, for having violated the Party Processions Act. As there could be no question about the fact, they were committed to the next Down Assizes, which were as usual to be held in the March of the following year.

It may now be seen, with a Government prosecution hanging over his head, why Mr. Johnston appeared not well satisfied with the Hillsborough meeting in support of the State Church. He thought that a resolution condemning the unequal administration of the Party Processions Act should be passed. The Marquis of Downshire and his friends, notwithstanding their professed sympathies with the Orangemen, avoided the subject as an unclean thing, and confined their efforts to condemning the policy of disestablishment.

Very soon after the Hillsborough meeting the three Fenians sentenced to death for the shooting of Sergeant Brett at Manchester were executed. The "God save Ireland," which one of them ejaculated before the fatal bolt was drawn, became a disloyal

watch-word. For weeks processions in memory of the three misguided men who had rescued the so-called "Colonel" Kelly by the sacrifice of their own lives became a practice in Dublin and the Irish Southern and Western cities. Those processions of Fenian sympathisers, generally too on Sundays, naturally irritated the Orangemen still more against the Party Processions Act and the Government which administered it against them, while allowing the Fenian processions as a matter of course. Lord Dufferin, as Lord-Lieutenant of the county of Down, had presided on the magisterial bench at Bangor when Mr. Johnston and some of his Orange followers were sent to be tried for violating this Party Processions Act. When the Fenian funeral processions became common, and especially after a most defiant one in Cork, he gave notice of a question with respect to them in the House of Lords. The reply given very curtly by Lord Derby as Prime Minister, and approved of by the Lord Chancellor Cairns, was that these Fenian processions with an avowedly disloyal object "were not illegal." In this manner the Prime Minister answered Lord Dufferin. He appeared to take a malicious pleasure in snubbing him; but the words however spoken, in the December of 1867, only embittered the feeling of the Orangemen against such an invidious statute. They did not fall to the ground.

The irritation against the Act was not confined to members of the Orange Lodges. The ordinary Conservative supporters of the Ministry were indeed

generally silent on the subject. They did not like to condemn any action of a Government of which Lord Derby was the Prime Minister, and of which Lord Cairns was called "our own Lord Chancellor." From a Liberal point of view in the position I occupied, I may unhesitatingly say that from this time I regarded the Party Processions Act, so interpreted and administered, as utterly indefensible. Lord Dufferin, as I soon had good reason for knowing, had independently come to the same conclusion. Lord Derby by his contemptuous reply had converted the most accomplished, the most Liberal, and the most statesmanlike of Irish noblemen into a decided opponent of the Act and an advocate of its repeal.

In the meanwhile, Mr. Johnston's trial for openly violating the statute came on in Downpatrick, the assize town of the county of Down. The then Mr. Justice Morris presided, and afterwards made, as his way was, a somewhat undignified joke on the subject. "I do not," he said, with his broad Southern accent, in addressing a jury in a libel case, "remember the part I took on that occasion with much pleasure, and I do not think that it was very pleasant to Mr. Johnston himself." The Attorney-General was brought down to prosecute Mr. Johnston and two of his followers for marching in procession on the preceding 12th of July to Bangor. They were convicted. Mr. Johnston was sentenced to two months' imprisonment. Just before the trial the Government had put the law in motion against the organisers of one of the Fenian funeral processions in Dublin, but

the jury had disagreed, and no conviction was obtained. Thus Mr. Johnston's imprisonment, therefore, had all the effect of contrast. Disloyal processions under the shadow of Dublin Castle could parade with impunity, but loyal though Orange processions, through a purely Protestant district in the county of Down, brought imprisonment to their principal organisers. Such a state of the law, as so applied, was unjustifiable on any Conservative, on any Liberal principle. Orangemen with all their faults, prejudices, and errors, in protesting against such inequality, occupied a justifiable position. As Burke wrote: "The poorest being that crawls on earth, contending to save itself from injustice and oppression, is an object respectable in the eyes both of God and man." This powerful sentence was applied to the stand the Orangemen were then making against what they considered to be an iniquitous law. They began to have the sympathies of many Ulster Liberals and of the Liberal newspaper which the Orangemen up to that time had always believed to be their inveterate and most determined opponent.

Mr. Johnston had to suffer his term of imprisonment in Downpatrick Jail. He suffered it like a man and a gentleman. His offence, such as it was, could only be regarded as of a technical character. It was very different from the acts for which certain Irish Nationalist members of Parliament and other similar patriots have suffered imprisonment. Unlike some of these men, who, like O'Donovan Rossa himself,

conducted themselves defiantly, Mr. Johnston submitted with patience and dignity to all the prison rules. He asked for no indulgence, and, so far as can be known, received none. He was regarded, and is still spoken of by the old officials, as a model prisoner. He made his own bed; he left his cell scrupulously neat and clean. That cell is still pointed out. Some of his admirers have regarded it with a veneration such as in the Middle Ages was produced in contemplating the abode of a favourite saint.

This conviction and imprisonment produced a profound sensation throughout all the Protestant districts of Ulster. To the Orangemen generally, Mr. Johnston in prison was more worthy of respect than Lord Mayo, the Irish Chief Secretary, or than Mr. Disraeli, who had succeeded Lord Derby as the Conservative Prime Minister. But the most enthusiastic admirers of the imprisoned violator of the Party Processions Act were among the Orange artisans of Belfast. Though professedly Conservative and of course Protestant, those men then were, and still are, very independent in their opinions. They may be cajoled, but they cannot be bought. Whatever Belfast may or may not be, it is a working men's town. Little more than a week after Mr. Johnston's conviction and imprisonment, a great gathering of Orange artisans was held in the Ulster Hall. It was with the object of expressing sympathy with the prisoner, of condemning the manner in which the Party Processions Act was being administered by a Conservative Government, and of

evidently preparing for Mr. Johnston's candidature in Belfast. The leaders of the party gave no encouragement to the demonstration; they did, indeed, all they could to discountenance it. The Orange newspaper under their influence denounced it, and misrepresented its object, which was said to be disguised Liberalism. The Orange artisans were entreated not to go to such a disloyal assembly. But they did go. They even, not very wisely, hissed the reporters of the local Conservative newspaper, which had so long been regarded as the principal Orange journal, and which afterwards gave a very brief and unsatisfactory account of this memorable meeting.

The Orangemen in Belfast were in revolt. Their example was not unlikely to be followed by a large body of Orangemen throughout the country. A meeting was held on the following evening in the same place, the Ulster Hall, in support of the Irish State Church. Mr. Johnston's friends charged twopence entrance to their meeting, and it was full to overflowing. Nothing was charged for entrance to the ordinary Conservative assembly, and it was not full. This was significant. It was alleged to be a purely Belfast meeting; but it was composed of friends of the Establishment from all parts of Ulster. The Marquis of Downshire, who had presided at the two Hillsborough meetings, was announced to preside at this Belfast demonstration. Owing to illness he was not present. It was whispered that this illness was political, that he was afraid to face some of Mr. Johnston's supporters,

who were determined to show their disapprobation of the slight put at Hillsborough upon him whom they now regarded as their chief, and whom they not long afterwards made the Orange Grand Master in Belfast. The suspicion of the Marquis of Downshire malingering from political motives was unjust. He was seriously ill, and very soon afterwards died. Popular to the last, and one who fully deserved his popularity, he was called away when the State Church was about to fall which he and the Ulster landlords generally had tried to save by imposing demonstrations, by sectarian appeals, and sometimes by very unjust misrepresentations. He was called away when things were changing all around him, when the earth was shaking beneath the feet, when the last hour of what was not very correctly called Protestant ascendency in Ireland had struck. "The big Marquis" was, according to his ideas, a good Churchman and a good landlord. His name is still mentioned with respect throughout Ulster.

The last meeting at which he had been expected to preside was, as has been said, a failure. Lord Mayo and Mr. Disraeli committed themselves to an Irish policy which did not improve their position in Parliament, and which discouraged their No-Popery supporters in Ulster. They were, they announced, willing to again bring in a measure dealing with the land question, to appoint a commission to consider the whole subject, to give a charter to a Catholic university, and even to provide

it with money for building and for educational objects generally, and, in order to please the Presbyterians, to increase the *Regium Donum*.

This had the appearance of a bribe. It was a cause of embarrassment to the ministerial candidates, who were now issuing their addresses in all parts of Ulster, and who still confidently referred to the there unbroken Tory phalanx of twenty-nine.

Mr. Charles Lanyon, who was very soon afterwards knighted, was one of the sitting members for Belfast. He had with a merely nominal opposition been chosen as successor to Lord Cairns. An Englishman who had been surveyor in the county of Antrim, an architect, and a thoroughly kindly and courteous gentleman, he was, however, scarcely a politician, and suffered by contrast with the "Sir Hugh," who had long been regarded with so much pride by the Belfast Conservatives. It was known that his colleague in the representation, Mr. Samuel Gibson Getty, would not again present himself to the choice of the electors, and that a successor to him would have to be found.

This, however, was regarded as a matter of no difficulty whatever. The discipline of the Conservative party in Belfast, as indeed throughout all Ulster, was remarkably good. The Orange Lodges, it was thought, could always be depended upon to lead the way to Conservative victories.

Mr. John Mulholland was at last, though not without some difficulty, selected as the second Conservative candidate. His family for three generations had

been connected with Belfast manufactures, with the cotton and afterwards with the linen industry. His father, Andrew, was one of two brothers who, after distinguishing themselves as weavers of calico and manufacturers of muslin, were the first who began the spinning of flax by machinery in Belfast. The great cotton mill in York Street having been destroyed by fire, they determined to rebuild it as a flax-spinning mill. Since that time the cotton manufacture in Belfast, and indeed in Ulster, has almost died out, it having been found unable to contend with the competition of Lancashire. But the linen manufacture continued to hold its ground and to extend. Of that trade the Mulhollands were among the most eminent representatives. The two brothers, Andrew and Sinclair, were also distinguished by their liberality to the town in which they acquired such large fortunes, and thus set an example which many of those who have gained similar fortunes in it have not followed so frequently as they might have done.

Mr. John Mulholland, the late Lord Dunleath, the son of Andrew, was the head of the great firm of linen spinners. He was considered to be identified with the staple industry, and believed to be one of the greatest authorities on the subject. He had taken part in negotiating the commercial treaty with France, was thought to understand commercial questions thoroughly, and was spoken of as the friend of Cobden and a sound political economist. Under certain circumstances, therefore, a better representa-

tive of a great and industrious community could scarcely have been found.

While the Conservatives of Belfast, and indeed throughout the United Kingdom, were preparing for the general election in the autumn, Mr. Johnston had completed his term of imprisonment. The Government had offered to release him on certain conditions, which it was rumoured, truly or falsely, he was not unwilling to accept. But his friends in Belfast, who had determined that he should be their candidate, earnestly advised him to come to no compromise with the Government. He was told that to do so was to throw away all prospect of election as one of the members for Belfast. Before his trial he had let fall some hints of an intention to contest that representation; but the threat was not regarded as serious. To avoid any demonstration on his discharge, he was unexpectedly and privately released before the expected time. But his admirers, both in Belfast and the county of Down, in which his small property was situated, were not to be balked. Mr. Johnston appeared at the appointed time, before the doors of the jail, from which he had previously been turned out, and he was escorted in procession through Downpatrick on his way home to Ballykilbeg.

A spirit had been roused which was not easily set at rest. It was extending from Belfast throughout all Protestant Ulster, where the Orangemen were supposed to be the strongest. Mr. Samuel Gibson Getty, then in ill-health at Wiesbaden, had been persuaded to send in his resignation. It was hoped

that if he thus anticipated the dissolution, Mr. John Mulholland might be placed in possession of the seat, and a contest at the general election avoided. But it soon appeared that these tactics would fail, and therefore Mr. Getty continued to sit until the dissolution, which was announced to take place in November.

The agitation in favour of the State Church, and against Mr. Gladstone's resolutions and the Suspensory Bill, was vigorously continued in Ulster. A number of ardent opponents of this policy were sent over to Great Britain; but they appeared to produce little effect, and were contemptuously called the Strolling Players.

They had quite enough to do at home. As the summer advanced, and the time for the general election approached, it was necessary that all hesitation should cease, and that the addresses of the various candidates should appear. The independent spirit, as shown by the Orange revolt in Belfast, threatened to become contagious. It was no secret, it had, indeed, been well understood, that the city of Londonderry would be contested by the then Serjeant Dowse, as a supporter of Mr. Gladstone's policy, against Lord Claud John Hamilton. It was whispered that Lord Newry would have a struggle for his seat in Newry; and, more alarming than all, that another independent Orangeman, following Mr. Johnston's example, might present himself to the electors of the old and historic borough of Carrickfergus, where the stone on which William of Orange landed on his way to the Boyne

was and is still pointed out, and is still buffeted by the waves.

The old party Conservatives in Belfast and the North generally were distracted. They scarcely knew what to do. Balaam could not have been more astonished when his ass began to speak. They who, like the writer of these reminiscences, were devoted to Mr. Gladstone's policy of disestablishment, with a reform of the land laws, which were part and parcel of the system of ascendency, thought they saw a great opportunity. To return in Belfast, which Lord Cairns had so long represented, a Liberal candidate pledged to disestablishment, and to encourage other Ulster constituencies to act in a similar spirit, was a project entertained from the time of Mr. Johnston's imprisonment, when the Orangemen in his cause began to exert themselves. From March until the elections came on in November it was a design of which I at least never lost sight; it was constantly before my eyes. What is more, I may say, I trust without any unbecoming egotism, that I never doubted the result.

The Conservatives in Belfast, who had the cause of this memorable crisis so much in their own hands, proceeded from one blunder to another. They affected to despise Mr. Johnston and his Orange artisans. Their newspaper refused to report his speeches; they called on all good and true Conservatives not to go to his meetings. Their rule in selecting candidates had been, as has been said, to have one a Protestant Episcopalian and the

other a Presbyterian. Lord Cairns was a Churchman; Mr. Getty belonged to the other great Protestant denomination. Sir Charles Lanyon, who now sat in Lord Cairns's old seat, was a member of the State Church. Mr. Mulholland, their second candidate, was also a Protestant Churchman. By this selection a number of Presbyterians were alienated. With many excellent qualities, tact could scarcely be regarded as one of Mr. Mulholland's most remarkable attributes. By not calling upon him on his arrival in Belfast he offended the principal Conservative Presbyterian, the late Mr. John Lytle, who had been three times mayor, and was thought himself to have strong claims to be chosen as the Conservative Presbyterian candidate. By certain other apparent though not intentional deficiencies in courtesy Mr. Mulholland alienated others. His speeches, as at the Social Science Congress in the preceding year, dealt a good deal with political economy; but the Orange artisans, and the Presbyterians who thought themselves slighted, cared nothing for political economy.

Even after Mr. Mulholland was virtually accepted as the second candidate of the Conservative party, certain Presbyterian dissentients still held aloof. Their hesitation was increased in the third week of August by the appearance of a Liberal Presbyterian in the field. They were not disinclined to accept a Presbyterian Conservative in the person of Mr. Charles E. Lewis, who had for some time been on the lookout for an Ulster constituency in which the Pres-

byterians were thought to be numerous. He was said to have been a Presbyterian for two years. He asserted that he had at least been one for six. In England the consideration of the religion of a candidate seldom enters into the calculations of political agents. In Ulster at this time the question of religion was always regarded as of importance, even when it was not mixed up with politics. The oldest Catholic merchant of Belfast, a man universally respected, said to me: "Here religion is thought everything; but when I went to Harrogate last summer, nobody there appeared to ask whether I was a Catholic or a Protestant." The contrast seemed to surprise him, and to be indeed almost unaccountable.

The Liberal Presbyterian candidate, Mr. M'Clure, afterwards Sir Thomas, was a man of a different stamp from Mr., afterwards Sir, Charles Lewis. He and his father before him had been identified with Belfast. It was said that one of the M'Clures had been associated with the defence of the city of Derry, in which his younger brother was then the highly respected senior minister of the First Congregation. The brothers, like the former members of the family, were Presbyterians, but very Liberal Presbyterians. A merchant, as his father had been, Mr. M'Clure had acquired a moderate fortune in his business. With his money he had recently purchased the estate of Belmont, through the Landed Estates Court, within three miles of Belfast. This he had managed so well, that, as has been stated, Lord Dufferin afterwards said on a complimentary occasion, he had given much older landlords a lesson how

to profitably administer their property without doing injustice to any one. Some years before, when the Liberals had contested Belfast, Mr. M'Clure had been brought forward as a Liberal Presbyterian, while another Liberal candidate, Mr. Ferguson, an Episcopalian, was before the constituency. The result inevitably was that they were both defeated. The disaster, of which Mr. M'Clure was thought to have been the cause, was the subject of considerable bitterness. Years, however, had passed away, and at this time the breach was thoroughly healed. The most eminent of Mr. M'Clure's opponents afterwards said in his presence, and with some degree of contrition, "I confess we did not at that time do the justice to Mr. M'Clure we ought to have done." Mr. M'Clure was now a much better Liberal than his former rival, Mr. Ferguson, who at this time remained quite neutral, and gave his old supporters no assistance in this great struggle against the Established Church. He had been spoken of sarcastically during the former contest as an old man who ought to take Parr's life pills. In reality he was then not much more than fifty, and had since appeared to have taken a new lease of life. He was tall, thin, somewhat shuffling in his gait, hesitating and drawling in his conversation, with a querulous manner, which prevented him from doing justice to his natural ability, which was considerable, and his acquired information, which was also not small. He had always been thoughtful, inquiring, painstaking. Though not a good speaker, he occasionally delivered himself with

dignity, and even eloquence. After having come forward as the Liberal candidate, he was accused in the local Conservative newspaper with being ready to sacrifice anything to become a member for Belfast. "It ought," he replied, "to be known to the writer of the article, as it must be to many people in this town, and in this hall, that if to represent Belfast had been the highest object of my ambition, that honour was long ago in my power; but to obtain it I should have sacrificed the convictions of a lifetime: I should have sacrificed all that in my eyes could render such an honour an honour at all."

Such was Mr. M'Clure, who from this time, and until Mr. Gladstone's great Irish reforms were carried, played a highly respectable and useful part in Ulster politics. Always open to information and anxious to be in the right, he was an honourable man, a just man, a straightforward man. As the late Mr. Joseph Biggar, who did not love his fellow-townsman, said of him: "You can rely upon Mr. M'Clure's word: what he says he will do, he will do; if he will never do more than he says he will do." He was certainly a very different politician from Mr. Biggar. Both, too, have passed away.

The four candidates were now before the constituency. Sir Charles Lanyon was in possession of one of the two seats. He was announced by the organ of the old party Conservatives as "the first and favourite candidate." This was an imprudent declaration. It showed that the union between the two coalesced candidates, as they were

understood to be, was not complete. Sir Charles had himself for some time held aloof from an intimate association with Mr. Mulholland; he was believed, indeed, to have given a pledge to remain neutral as between Mr. Mulholland and Mr. Johnston. But the thoroughgoing Conservatives, conscious of their strength, would not tolerate this professed neutrality. He had at last to identify himself with the second candidate, and was taunted with a breach of faith. The changes were rung on the knight who broke his plighted word.

Till this union was complete, and the coalition between Sir Charles Lanyon and Mr. Mulholland at last ostentatiously avowed, every effort was made to induce the Liberal supporters of Mr. M'Clure to give their second vote to Mr. Mulholland. They had this second vote; how could they use it? The following conversation passed between one who wished the Liberals to support Mr. Mulholland and a very energetic supporter of Mr. M'Clure. It may be taken as a very fair example of many similar conversations during the contest, and before Sir Charles Lanyon had made common cause with Mr. Mulholland.

"You cannot deny that Mr. Mulholland is a moderate man?"

"No person denies it."

"He has very sound views on commercial matters. He is a Free Trader."

"So are all the Belfast linen merchants; they know that they have nothing to gain by Protection."

"There is only one question on which he may be thought to differ from the Liberal party, the Church question."

"Quite true; but it is, you see, the great question now before the constituencies. It is, in fact, the one question."

"He is not opposed to Church reform."

"But he went to Hillsborough."

"His speech at the meeting was very moderate. You were there as a looker-on, and you know that he said nothing of an offensive character."

"No, he was studiously moderate. But there he was at Hillsborough."

"Surely you would prefer him to such an Orange firebrand as Mr. Johnston?"

"I am not so sure. Mr. Johnston and his followers are acting with much moderation. They profess to be independent; Liberals in Ulster ought to encourage independence even in Orangemen. Mr. Mulholland cannot be independent."

"Then you will not advise your friends to give their second votes to so moderate and able a man as Mr. Mulholland?"

"No."

"Will you advise them to give their second votes to Mr. Johnston."

"That depends. I may, however, say at once and for all that I, for one, rather than support Mr. Mulholland, would cut off my right hand."

"Oh."

So this conversation ceased. Nothing alarmed the supporters of Sir Charles Lanyon and Mr. Mulholland more than the announcement, which was soon afterwards made, that Mr. M'Clure's friends would give vote for vote to Mr. Johnston. This declaration gave great offence to the party Conservatives, who were united in supporting the two candidates of the Conservative Association. There was nothing to cause justifiable indignation at this policy as it was avowed. It was after the most well-understood electioneering tactics. In taking this course, Liberals were sacrificing no principle. Whatever Mr. Johnston may have since become, at this time, when it was necessary for him to keep on some terms with the Liberals who had their second votes to give, he certainly appeared the most Liberal of the three Conservative candidates. Though an Orangeman, he was very reticent on the question of the disestablishment of the Church, repeatedly declaring it to be a large one, and somewhat mysteriously intimating that if he list to speak, he might say something about it not very pleasant. So equivocal, indeed, were his utterances thought to be on this absorbing subject, that a placard was issued in the name of Dr. Cooke, then very ill and on his death-bed, condemnatory of Mr. Johnston's reserve. On the land question he was the independent Orange candidate, out-spoken, advocating a thorough reform in words which were quite satisfactory to the Ulster Liberals. His father-in-law, Dr.

Drew, was alleged to have been obliged to leave his place of residence near his church in county Down owing to having been on bad terms with the landed proprietor of the neighbourhood. Dr. Drew and his son-in-law, Mr. Johnston, had from recent experience become convinced of the injustice of the Irish land system. This Dr. Drew, as a thorough Orange clergyman, was almost as influential among the Tory and Orange Protestant Episcopalians as the venerable Dr. Cooke had long been among the Tory and Orange Presbyterians.

The month of November came. The contest in Belfast was intensified. The election, and other contests in the Ulster borough constituencies already mentioned, became even more exciting as the dissolution of the Parliament took place. Mr. Disraeli and Lord Derby having taken their celebrated leap in the dark to household suffrage in the British towns, and to what was scarcely equivalent to it, a rating franchise of over four pounds in the Irish boroughs, there were several elements of uncertainty in these Ulster constituencies, and especially in the large constituency of Belfast.

Reports of a more or less contradictory character were in circulation. Sometimes it was said that Mr. Mulholland would retire; then that Mr. Johnston could not go to the poll for want of money, which his supporters had been as much as possible prevented from collecting; and again, that Mr. M'Clure was sick of a contest which he thought on his side to be hopeless. The most serious danger to the Liberal

candidate was the possible and even probable retirement of Mr. Mulholland. Every effort was made to keep that gentleman before the constituency. At no time was a decided attitude of hostility taken up against him by Mr. M'Clure's friends. They played a very discreet game, in which every move was carefully calculated.

The Conservatives, deserted by a large number of the Orangemen, on whose support they had so long calculated, seemed in a state of blind helplessness. They stumbled about like Polyphemus in his cave, after his one eye had been put out by Ulysses, and could only grope their way. But they still attempted to break up the public meetings of the Liberal candidate. This was a bad practice which had long been carried on by the ruling party; but the Orange democracy on Mr. Johnston's side now gave those proceedings no countenance. In the city of Derry their leader himself, indeed, interfered in the cause of fair play. He advised the Apprentice Boys and the Orangemen of the Maiden City not to disturb the meetings of the Liberal candidate, Serjeant Dowse.

The day of nomination arrived, the 18th of November. The election was fixed for the 20th. It was hoped that the nominations might be made in the open air. The old Court House, in which the local magistrates sat, was a wretched building, utterly unworthy of the town, and miserably inadequate for the accommodation of the four candidates and their respective supporters. But the Mayor, it was alleged in the interests of the Conservative party, with which

he was connected, announced that the business would be done inside the building. As soon as the doors were open, the body of the edifice was taken possession of by an Orange mob, who waved their orange handkerchiefs and shouted lustily for Mr. Johnston. The platform was occupied by friends of all the candidates; but much that was said passed merely in dumb show. The irrepressible John Rea, with characteristic inconsistency, interfered on the side of the two coalesced Conservative candidates, and made a long and of course irrelevant speech, in order that the proceedings could be adjourned to see if, at the last moment, Mr. Mulholland might be induced to retire. He continued until the patience of the rougher part of the audience was exhausted, when he was struck violently in the face, and immediately afterwards it seemed that he and the Mayor, in his chain of office, appeared to be struggling together. He succeeded in his object. To the vexation of the supporters of Mr. Johnston and Mr. M'Clure, the Mayor announced that the meeting would be adjourned until the following day. Rea shouted to Mr. Mulholland, "Retire! Ah, retire!" and was soon afterwards, with the blood still streaming from his face, seen marching down the High Street, proud of the delay he had caused. It has been said that Mr. Rea was Mr. Joseph Biggar's friend, and his teacher in the art of obstruction which Mr. Biggar afterwards introduced with so much success in the House of Commons, and practised with Mr. Parnell when they stood almost alone against the more moderate

Home Rulers, under the leadership of Mr. Isaac Butt. This scene in the Belfast Court House was the prototype of other obstructive scenes at Westminster, as when Mr. Biggar read extracts from a Blue Book for some three hours.

The next day the nomination was completed. There was, it was said, but twenty-four hours before the battle. Belfast was in a state of great excitement. The issue at stake was really Imperial, and not local. If a Liberal candidate in favour of the policy of disestablishment could be returned in the very citadel of ascendency in Ulster, the effect could not but be far-reaching. This was not an ordinary election at all, giving a vote to one side or to the other. If Mr. M'Clure, as a supporter of Mr. Gladstone, could be returned for such an inveterate Tory and Orange constituency, the moral effect could not but be enormous, not only in Ireland, where other elections were pending, but on all the remaining constituencies to be contested, and within the walls of Parliament itself. Having thought, planned, and struggled for nine months to bring about such a victory, now that the issue was firmly knit, and there could be no change in the situation at all likely to seriously alter it, as I went home in the early morning before the polling, I experienced a singular feeling of calmness, satisfaction, and almost of indifference.

"Mr. M'Clure is going in, sir." These were the words which greeted my ears on sitting down to breakfast nearly three hours after the polling began.

Up to mid-day the two independent candidates steadily gained ground over their opponents. A desperate effort was made to retrieve the fortunes of the coalition. Mr. Mulholland had pledged himself not to retire, but his warmest supporters now called upon him to announce his resignation in order that Sir Charles Lanyon might yet be returned over Mr. M'Clure by the second votes of some of Mr. Johnston's supporters, who then knew that their candidate was safe. Sir Charles himself went round to the various Conservative rooms and polling-booths asking the Johnstonites to vote for "Johnston and Lanyon;" it was no longer "Lanyon and Mulholland." But the appeal, even if it ever could have been successful, was made too late. When the poll closed on that autumn evening, it was known that Mr. Johnston and Mr. M'Clure had been returned by large majorities.

While the enthusiastic rejoicing at the result was at its height, news came of other Ulster victories almost equally gratifying to Mr. Gladstone's supporters in Belfast and throughout the North of Ireland. Serjeant Dowse had been returned over Lord Claud John Hamilton for the city of Derry. Mr. Dalway, an independent Orangeman, whose ancestors had been associated with Carrickfergus ever since the time of Queen Elizabeth, was also successful over a very influential opponent in that ancient borough, or, as it is called, the county of the town of Carrickfergus. Mr. Kirk, a Liberal Presbyterian merchant, had been also victorious over Lord Newry in the borough of Newry. Wherever a seat had been challenged in Mr.

Gladstone's interest it had been won by one of his followers. This, too, in what was so often called Protestant Ulster, when the great question at issue was the disestablishment of the Protestant State Church. Mr. Gladstone himself did not anticipate any such result. Just before the elections a distinguished Ulster nobleman, one of his recognised supporters, a former and a subsequent colleague, said to him: "My friends tell me that we may win some seats in Ulster." Mr. Gladstone incredulously shook his head; he did not believe in any such victories. Notwithstanding so many unscrupulous appeals to sectarian prejudice on the question of the disestablishment of the Protestant State Church, the Ulster Liberals had been victorious all along their line.

None of them ever regretted the work they did. They were prepared to support Mr. Gladstone in other great remedial reforms which had been foreshadowed. But they were then, with Mr. Gladstone himself, decided Unionists, looking on any proposal to repeal the Act of Union, or to tamper with it, as not a Liberal policy at all, but retrogressive, dangerous, incredible, and impossible. It never occurred to them that, more than seventeen years afterwards, for declining to follow their revered leader in his new Irish Home Rule policy, they would be denounced by himself as degenerate Liberals or little better than Tories, as untrue to the Liberal associations of their forefathers. This is, however, what so many of the Ulster Liberals, who are now what they were in the general election of 1868, and who

did their best for the success of recognised Liberal principles, have lived to see. At that time Mr. Gladstone himself, on his defeat in Lancashire, declared that the victories in Belfast and Londonderry more than compensated him for his own temporary humiliation.

CHAPTER IX

1869

Meeting of the New Parliament—Petitions against the New Liberal Borough Members—The Belfast Petition—Charges of Personal Bribery—Serjeant Dowse in the Witness Box—"Fourpence a Day"—Electioneering Expenditure of Sir Arthur Guinness—Banquet to Mr. M'Clure—Lord Dufferin and the Irreversible Verdict—Treatment of the Protestant Bishop of Down and Connor—The Earl of Derby's Last Protest against Disestablishment—The Delay in Repealing the Party Processions Act.

THE newly elected Liberal and Independent Ulster members had of course to attend the first meeting of the House of Commons in December. Mr. Kirk, Serjeant Dowse, and Mr. M'Clure left for London to vote for the motion of "No confidence" which the victorious Opposition were expected to bring forward. Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues anticipated this motion, and immediately resigned without standing the brunt of the expected debate and the division. Mr. Gladstone condemned this sudden resignation before the meeting of the new Parliament as almost, if not quite, unconstitutional. In justice, however, it must be added that he twice afterwards took a similar course himself on finding that the

verdict of the constituencies to which he appealed was given against him on other questions.

The formation of the new Government was watched with much interest in Ulster. Just at the close of the year it was followed by local events which kept alive the bitterness of the fiercely contested Belfast election, and the other successful Liberal contests in Ulster.

Petitions were presented against the return of Mr. M'Clure, Mr. Dalway, and Serjeant Dowse for bribery. The Belfast petition had been carefully kept secret until the last moment, when it was sprung upon the victorious Liberals like a mine. After the victory there had been great rejoicings among the members of that party in Belfast. The aspect of the town appeared to have changed. The Conservatives were no longer exultant and defiant. They walked about almost with a sense of humiliation. Many of them could scarcely look their acquaintances on the other side in the face. But they were preparing for what they hoped would be their revenge.

When it was reported that Mr. Johnston's Orange supporters who had undertaken to return him free of expense could not, through the opposition of the Conservative leaders, find the money, some Liberal gentlemen gave a promise that they would guarantee five hundred pounds to meet his election expenses. No secret was made of this intention. It was known to Mr. Johnston himself. It was brought publicly before the Police Court, even before the money was subscribed. Three hundred pounds of the sum were

paid to the treasurer of the Johnston Electioneering Fund, and the other two to members of the committee who were authorised to collect subscriptions.

The subscription of this five hundred pounds was one of the charges of bribery in the election petition. Had the promoters of this document contented themselves with basing their case on this payment of money as illegal, no reasonable fault could have been found with their proceedings. The question was really one of law, not of fact. This was admitted; but, not satisfied with bringing this charge, his Conservative opponents accused Mr. M'Clure, a most conscientious and scrupulous elder in the Presbyterian Church, of personal bribery. Many of the most respectable gentlemen of Belfast, deputy lieutenants, magistrates, and others in the best social positions, some of whom had taken no part in the election at all, found themselves, to their great astonishment, in the same black list. The charges were deliberately brought forward, and efforts were made, not of a very creditable character, to find evidence in their support.

The *Northern Whig* in a series of articles condemned such proceedings in strong terms. For thus writing what the editor from his own personal knowledge well knew to be true, a motion for attachment was made in the Irish Court of Common Pleas. This was a new development of political tactics with respect to election petitions. The first petitions had just been decided. It was only at this time, after the general election of 1868, that the trial of election

petitions by judges had begun. The experiment was quite new. It was the first time that the House of Commons had given over to directly legal tribunals on the spot the investigations into the purity of elections hitherto so long carried on by Select Committees. It was contended in the Irish Court of Common Pleas before the four judges that the House of Commons, in thus delegating its powers with respect to the trial of election petitions to the courts, never intended to give them more authority over newspapers than it had itself exercised. Newspapers had been accustomed to comment on election petitions, when they were to be tried by Committees of the House of Commons itself. They had even been accustomed to comment on the evidence during the progress of those trials. Why should not a similar liberty be allowed to the public press, when those petitions were to be tried by judges, who were not likely to be influenced by leading articles, they being trained lawyers, accustomed to decide according to evidence, and in their new positions being both the jury and the judge? This was the argument most urged by counsel against the motion for attachment. The application was refused. The four judges differed, two being in favour, and two against the motion.

Defeated in this attack on the press, these party Conservatives were even more completely defeated when the election petitions were tried. The scandalous charges of personal bribery made against the most respectable Liberal gentlemen of Belfast, with the names of the persons alleged to be bribed attached

to each of them individually, utterly broke down. There was in fact no attempt made to substantiate them at all, except in the case of Mr. M'Clure himself. A man called Spence, a carter, was put into the witness-box to swear that he actually received in his own house a five-pound note from the Liberal candidate for his vote. The scene in the investigation of this sensational charge was dramatic. Every place in the court was occupied; standing room there was not for hundreds anxious to obtain admission. The brief light of a January day was fading, when the witness, pale as death, and with falsehood written on his brow, stood up hesitating and trembling to be subjected to cross-examination by Mr. Andrews. A few questions disposed of this incredible story. This witness descended from the box virtually convicted of perjury. That night he left Belfast, and never afterwards reappeared. It turned out that even Sir John Preston, Spence's employer, himself a magistrate and a strong Conservative partisan, had not thought it unbecoming in him to take Spence's deposition. This fact was strongly commented upon by Mr. Hugh Law, the leading counsel for Mr. M'Clure. The three counsel opposed to the petition were all eminent lawyers who soon rose to high judicial positions. Mr. Hugh Law, who afterwards sat for the County of Derry, became Irish Attorney-General, and at last Lord Chancellor; Mr. Andrews, the second counsel, is now Mr. Justice Andrews, of the Irish Court of Exchequer. Mr. Porter, the junior counsel, is the Master of the Rolls. The judge who

tried the petition was Baron Fitzgerald, one of the most conscientious judges who ever sat on the Irish Bench. He commented in strong terms on the conduct of the petitioners in bringing forward such grave charges against their principal political opponents, only to summarily abandon them in court. One sentence of the Judge's decision made the Treasurer and the conducting agent of Mr. Johnston turn very red. Referring to the payment of the five hundred pounds as alleged to be bribery, the Baron said: "I can understand that this charge might be brought against Mr. Johnston's seat, but how does it affect the seat of Mr. M'Clure?"

The defeated petitioners and their sympathisers fled from the court in dismay. Among the Liberals and Independents who remained after the judgment had been delivered, there was a general shaking of hands. When the news of the decision was announced outside, the people congregated in thousands before the court-house and cheered vociferously. They were anxious to draw Mr. M'Clure back to his hotel in triumph; but he and his friends, fearing a collision from the rival mobs in a state of great excitement, made their escape from the scene by a back way.

In the city of Derry, Serjeant Dowse's seat was also attacked by a petition from the defeated Conservatives, with a similar result, though not with equal recklessness. The Serjeant, whose rollicking humour and apparent audacity astonished the House of Commons, when he soon afterwards became one

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of Mr. Gladstone's law officers, made in his own case one of the worst witnesses that ever appeared in the box. He was repeatedly remonstrated with by the presiding judge, trembled violently, and seemed quite unable to answer or even to comprehend some of the questions put to him in cross-examination.

Mr. Dalway's return for Carrickfergus was also challenged. That petition was signally defeated. The character of the freemen of the ancient town did not stand high; but on this occasion they passed triumphantly through a somewhat trying ordeal. A poor man, who described himself as a beggar, but said that he did not know what a "mendicant" was, was put into the box to prove the charge of bribery. He said that he had, as a beggar, received fourpence on the polling-day. "Was it for your vote?" He could not say. His daily earnings as a beggar were, it seemed, fourpence. He did not appear to have made more on the day of the election as a freeman of Carrickfergus.

While the party Conservatives were thus defeated on their three election petitions in Ulster, it is a remarkable fact that their successful candidate, Sir Arthur Guinness, was unseated in the city of Dublin. Into the case, as tried before Mr. Justice Keogh at the time, it is not necessary to enter. Sir Arthur only defeated the Liberal in favour of disestablishment by ten votes, and during the trial of the petition it was stated that the election cost him ten thousand pounds. At the trial of the petition against Mr. M'Clure, in Belfast, the leading counsel

in support of it, Mr. Falkiner, now the Recorder of Dublin, said that three thousand two hundred pounds set down as the cost of the election by Mr. M'Clure, could not have been legitimately spent. But Sir Charles Lanyon and Mr. Mulholland, who coalesced, and who may be said to have run in couples, spent almost an equal sum. The contest, too, had been a very protracted one, virtually occupying more than four months. Mr. Falkiner himself was one of Sir Arthur Guinness's Central Committee for the election in which the baronet had, it seemed, to pay ten thousand pounds.

In Belfast, where the Liberals had been so much harassed by the petition against Mr. M'Clure, there was much rejoicing at the result of the petition against Sir Arthur Guinness in Dublin. It was sarcastically said that, as his father had spent a large sum in restoring St. Patrick's Cathedral, the son thought himself justified in spending another large sum in a single election contest to try to save the Establishment as a whole in the crisis of its fate.

Little more than a week after the defeat of the Belfast election petition, a public banquet was given to Mr. M'Clure in celebration of his victory. It was very numerously and influentially attended. Mr. Johnston was invited, but was unable to be present. He sent a letter declaring his thorough sympathy with the defeat of the petition, expressing the opinion that the election had been a pure one, and condemning in the strongest terms the conduct of the petitioners. Some years afterwards Mr. Johnston, in

different circumstances, showed himself forgetful of the fact of having written this letter. Lord Dufferin, who had joined the new Ministry as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, was the chairman of the banquet to Mr. M'Clure. The moral of these Ulster contests, and the unsuccessful petitions which followed them, may appropriately conclude with the words in which Lord Dufferin then referred to their political significance. Addressing the large body of gentlemen at the various tables in the Ulster Hall on this memorable occasion, he said: "When a solemn appeal was made to the population of Ulster, now for the first time admitted to the privileges of the Constitution, from the four great centres of Protestant wealth and industry, from the chief manufacturing town of Ulster, as well as from the sacred shrine of Orange enthusiasm, when the question was asked, what in the future should be the leading characteristic of the government of their country, from one and all there proceeded the noble and generous response of religious equality. Gentlemen, such words as these once uttered can never be recalled. No matter what may be the changes and chances of political life, no matter what party may succeed to the administration of political affairs, the verdict you have pronounced is irreversible."

The verdict was irreversible. But the Irish State clergy and their friends struggled hard against the inevitable. The Ulster Liberal victories on this question of disestablishment had a great effect in England, and much encouraged Mr. Gladstone to

persevere in the great work he had undertaken. There was a large majority of the new House of Commons in favour of the Prime Minister's policy, of which the Suspensory Bill of the last session was regarded as the foundation, before he introduced his measure on the 1st of March, 1869. But the Irish State clergy generally cannot be said at this crisis to have acted wisely. The Irish bishops went down to Windsor, as though Her Majesty, who has always been so strictly a constitutional sovereign, could interfere with the new Ministers, who had been carried into office after the general election to give effect to the policy sanctioned by large majorities in the constituencies. The clergy requested the Government to summon a convocation of the Irish Church; but what under such circumstances could a convocation do? The request was met with a refusal. They were advised to come to terms with Mr. Gladstone; but this they resolutely refused to do. They would, they said, listen to no compromise, and they were called the No Compromise Men. The Bishop of Down, Connor, and Dromore counselled moderation and concession, but this advice given at a meeting was received with as much indignation as his suggestion a year and a half previously, that the clergy and their friends should endeavour to reform some of the worst anomalies in the Establishment. He was greeted with cries of "Traitor," "Judas," and "No surrender."

The venerable prelate, as this work is being written, has died the Primate of the disestablished Church, a

dignity to which, as has already been stated, he was since the disestablishment freely chosen. His death has been received with general regret. Not a whisper was at last heard against him as unfaithful to his Church; but much was said about his efforts, both as Bishop of Down and Connor and subsequently as Primate, to provide large sums independently of the old and badly distributed endowments to meet the spiritual wants of the people.

It is scarcely necessary here to dwell on the provisions of the Irish Church Act. The proposal to the landlords to get rid of the tithe-rent charge was admitted by themselves to be liberal. One of them said to his son in the hearing of the present writer, "Well, I must say Gladstone offers us very fair terms."

"But, father, you will for the future have to support your own clergy!"

"Ah! I had forgotten that," was the reply.

"To support your own clergy!" This unfortunately the rich Protestant landlords in Ireland had hitherto never thought of doing. On putting down as members of the Establishment all who did not express their dissent, the Church population was scarcely seven hundred thousand. Mr. Gladstone, in introducing his measure, stated that the annual value of the Church's property amounted to seven hundred thousand pounds, or as a whole to sixteen millions. This, it must be confessed, was a large sum. It was rendered more significant by the fact that the Catholic Church in Ireland, with several millions of people, most of them very poor, had to depend on

voluntary contributions, and had no State endowment at all. In making these remarks there is not the slightest desire to say anything invidious or unkind. The Irish Protestant Episcopalian clergy inherited the system with all its indefensible anomalies. Most of them naturally thought that whatever was in this respect was right. Many of them took up the indefensible position that the Church as an Establishment was outside the jurisdiction of Parliament, and that with it the Legislature had no right to interfere.

At a Diocesan Conference held in Belfast to protest against the Irish Church Bill, the authority of Parliament to deal with this question at all was strongly denied. Again, the bishop of the diocese for advising a compromise was denounced. Again, he was not equivocally declared to be untrue to his Church. The principle of religious equality was indignantly repudiated. One of the speakers said that there was no religious equality in heaven, and asked how therefore should there be any on earth? The bishop had suggested prudence. "We are not prudent men," said another speaker: "we don't pretend to be." The climax was reached when it was suggested by the Rev. Dr. Drew that as there was a famous procession through the streets of London when Lord O'Neill's great ancestor went with his followers to prostrate himself at the feet of Queen Elizabeth, so the then Lord O'Neill, who was present, should in his robes, the bishop in his lawn sleeves, and all his clergy in their vestments, march through London to Buckingham Palace, fall at the feet of Queen Victoria, and

entreat her not to pass the dreadful Irish Church Bill. The parallel was inappropriate. Shane O'Neill prostrated himself before Queen Elizabeth, however insincerely, as a sign of submission. The Irish Churchmen talked of resistance, and wished the Sovereign to make with them a common cause.

But there was very little of the old Ulster resolution in this effort to defeat the Irish Church Bill. The country had been appealed to on the question by Mr. Gladstone's opponents, and it had returned him a majority of 112 to support Irish disestablishment. The fact could not be gainsaid. Mr. Disraeli and Lord Cairns, the two Conservative leaders, saw that the House of Lords could not wisely resist the passing of the measure. They virtually advised a surrender. Their old chief, Lord Derby, was indignant at what he thought to be cowardice. The aged Rupert of debate, on seeing that his old colleagues had given up the cause, was heard to mutter, "Then I am no longer wanted here." He stalked indignantly away. Thus Edward Geoffrey, fourteenth Earl of Derby, vanishes from the political history of England. He may be said to have died with the Irish State Church, which he wished still to uphold. In him to the last remained something of the haughty spirit with which, as Mr. Stanley, the Irish Chief Secretary of Earl Grey's administration, he bade defiance to O'Connell.

But the Orangemen who had any pretence to foresight and independence were still thinking more of the Party Processions Act than of the Church. Hence,

from a popular point of view, the resistance to the policy of disestablishment was in the rank and file weakened by being diverted. Mr. Johnston's words that the Church question was a large one had produced a great effect. He delayed going up to Parliament. Advantage was taken of his absence by Sir Thomas Bateson to anticipate him by giving notice of a Bill repealing the Party Processions Act. But the independent Orange member was equal to the occasion. He succeeded in obtaining precedence. The Government allowed the Bill to be read a first time. But this, though represented as a great concession, was only a matter of ordinary courtesy. The Ministers went, however, a little further. They caused inquiries to be made of the various magistrates respecting the advisability of repealing the Act. Some of the answers were favourable; others, perhaps the majority, unfavourable. There was hesitation, there was delay. The Ministers could not make up their minds to take occasion by the hand, and at once get rid of a measure which had virtually become indefensible and inexcusable.

Lord Dufferin strongly advised his colleagues to accept Mr. Johnston's Bill. But though Lord Dufferin was Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, and, as he afterwards said, maid of all work to the Administration, he was, strangely enough, not a member of the Cabinet. His advice, with the advice of those who had taken an active part in returning the Liberal candidates in Ulster, was not taken when

it might have had the best effect. For some time afterwards the Party Processions Act was allowed to exist, until Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues at last gave way on the question. But this concession, when it was made, was not received with the gratitude it might have called forth in the session of 1869. The Ministers were recommended to allow the Bill repealing the Party Processions Act to go through Parliament simultaneously with the great measure disestablishing the Irish State Church. When the Party Processions Act was repealed, Mr. Johnston gave the Government no thanks. He had been irritated by the refusal to accept his measure when he had introduced it; and he was all the more irritated by the suspicion that the Catholic influences in the Cabinet had for the time successfully counteracted the wiser counsels of Lord Dufferin and others who knew Ulster well. The mere suspicion that Catholic officials and their friends were keeping on the Statute Book the Party Processions Act, when other members of the Government wished it to be repealed, was enough to rouse the old sectarian spirit of the Orangemen, and especially of such an Orangeman as Mr. Johnston. He afterwards complained bitterly that he had not been fairly met, and there was some reason for his complaint. The Government did at last what they might much better have done at first.

This question of the repeal of the Party Processions Act was, however, new. The late Con-

servative Government, had, as has been seen, strongly enforced it against a very popular Orangeman. Conservatives had condemned the defiant violations of the law as much as their Liberal opponents. But had it not been for the Fenian funeral processions the unfair operation of the Act would not have forced itself on public attention. In his cross-examination during the trial of the election petition, Mr. M'Clure was asked what he thought of the Party Processions Act. As a Liberal he was expected to say something in its favour, and thus show the inconsistency of himself and of his friends in acting more or less with Mr. Johnston and the Independent Orangemen. "Well, well, well," replied the Liberal member for Belfast, slowly and deliberately, "I think—I think a good deal might be said against that Act." It was thought that he might offend his Catholic supporters by making such a declaration. One eminent Catholic official, the highest judicial officer in Ireland, was reported to have strong objections to the repeal of the Statute. Most of his colleagues in the Irish Government, to whom Mr. Gladstone and his new Cabinet naturally deferred, were during the first year of office known to be opposed to taking the step which Lord Dufferin and his friends in the North of Ireland earnestly advised.

The importance of the Ulster borough elections, with their bearing on the disestablishment, has rendered it necessary to say more on what may to some people be thought local politics than is desirable. It is time to say something of the principal officials engaged in

Mr. Gladstone's first long administration, and of the Irish Land measure which had been foreshadowed during their first session, and was, after the Church Act had been carried, to be the great work of the following year.

CHAPTER X

1869

Change of Government—The Irish Officials—Mr. Chichester Fortescue—The New Chancellorship—Character of Lord O'Hagan—The Influence of Cardinal Cullen—Indignation of the Disestablished Church People at the "Traitor Gladstone"—Threats of Murder—Death of the Fourth Marquis of Hertford—His Character—The Vacancy in County Antrim—Selection of the Conservative Candidate—Captain Seymour—Sir Shafto Adair as the Liberal Candidate—The Old Electioneering Arts—Landlord Influence—The Day of Nomination in the Antrim Court House—The Last Election before the Ballot Act—The Beginning of a Great Change.

In the formation of the Government, Lord Spencer became Lord Lieutenant, Mr. Chichester Fortescue Chief Secretary, and Lord O'Hagan Lord Chancellor. There was some desire expressed for an Irish nobleman to be Lord Lieutenant. Lord Charlemont's name and Lord Dufferin's were both mentioned for the office. Lord Charlemont was put forward by some friends in his confidence. He was at the time President of the Ulster Liberal Society, and therefore considered to have claims. It was generally believed that had he been offered the Lord Lieutenancy he

would have accepted it, and that he was somewhat dissatisfied at not having had the refusal. Lord Dufferin had of course much higher pretensions; but it is possible that for a time he might have been induced to take the Irish Viceroyalty, as he afterwards did those of Canada and India. Mr. Gladstone, since his conversion to Home Rule, has made it a reproach that Ireland was not generally governed by Irishmen, that Englishmen and Scotchmen were appointed. But whenever he had the selection for the higher Irish offices, it must in all candour be admitted that he generally preferred Englishmen and Scotchmen. Of them a long list might be given.

Lord Spencer, when first appointed to the Lord Lieutenancy, had had no official experience of Ireland. Though acknowledged to be an able administrator, when he first went over to Dublin, with one servant and a carpet-bag, as was said, to take the oath of qualification for the office, he was in no way connected with the country, and might be considered in it to be unknown when compared with Lord Dufferin, or even Lord Charlemont, who at least had a great Irish name.

Mr. Chichester Fortescue was, however, an Irishman. He had been Irish Chief Secretary during Lord Russell's short-lived administration, and now returned to the same office. When Irish Minister before he had had serious difficulties with respect to the education question. Those difficulties pursued him in his return to the Chief Secretaryship. He had become irritated, especially with the Presbyterians of the North of Ireland, at the opposition they had

given to his denominational tendencies, both with respect to the national schools and the Queen's University. He could at last scarcely bear to listen with ordinary patience to any representations contrary to his own views. At the Chief Secretary's Lodge one afternoon he said, in answer to a friendly remonstrance on the subject, "What is the use of talking about the national system as non-sectarian? Surely it is now denominational." Mr. Fortescue had excellent intentions. He was anxious to please all parties. He did not, however, make sufficient allowance for the opposition he had to encounter. Without prejudices himself, he thought little of them in others.

Mr. O'Hagan, soon afterwards Lord O'Hagan, the Lord Chancellor, was of course an Irishman. As an Irish lawyer he could scarcely have been otherwise. But he was more than an Irishman: he was an Irish Catholic. He was the first Irish Catholic Chancellor. The Bill allowing Catholics to hold the Irish Chancellorship had been passed by the former administration. It was natural that the Catholic bishops should at the earliest opportunity wish that a Chancellor should be appointed of their own faith. Their wishes were equivalent to commands with a Government which had entered office to carry out a policy of religious equality. When, however, it was announced that Lord O'Hagan had received the appointment, there was at first some soreness, even among certain Liberal Protestants, as well as among the Conservatives in the North of Ireland. "I sup-

pose you know Mr. Justice O'Hagan is appointed Lord Chancellor?" was the remark made to an eminent Irish Presbyterian clergyman who had distinguished himself as an advocate of the policy of disestablishment. This reverend gentleman winced a little. "I have heard the report," he replied, "but you know that Mr. O'Hagan never has been an equity lawyer. He has had no experience in the Court of Chancery." This too was the opinion of Judge Christian, who had had a great deal of this experience, and considered that he had especial claims to the office, with its large salary and very liberal retiring pension. That judge, rough and overbearing, lost no opportunity of assailing the new Chancellor even from the judgment seat. Those exhibitions were, to say the least, somewhat undignified, and they gave pain to one of the kindest and most lovable of men. It may be admitted that the new Chancellor, when he was raised to the highest legal position in Ireland and to the peerage, had not had much to do with Chancery proceedings. But he was an excellent criminal lawyer, and his judgment was sound. In his decisions as Lord Chancellor he seldom made a mistake.

Lord O'Hagan, like Lord Cairns as English Lord Chancellor, and Sir Joseph Napier, who was also an Irish Lord Chancellor, was considered a Belfast man. His father was a Belfast tradesman who extended his business into that of a general merchant. He had been in partnership with another Catholic merchant, who carried on a similar business. Lord O'Hagan's father was Mr. Edward Hagan, who was generally

spoken of as having been a very worthy and honourable man. Lord O'Hagan, who took the prefix of O, was educated at the Belfast Academical Institution. In this educational establishment, of which so many distinguished men in the North of Ireland have been pupils, he always took the warmest interest. During a visit to Belfast in his old age he spent hours in the Institution looking for the manuscript of an essay he had written there as a boy.

As a Catholic in the North of Ireland he had great obstacles to surmount. He left Belfast, where he had edited a small magazine, for Dublin, and did what he could to push his fortunes at the Bar. He retained his connection with his native town by being on the North-East Circuit. Having been a junior counsel for O'Connell during his trial, he had raised Unionist prejudices against him, and they, of course, were not a recommendation to Unionist solicitors who had the disposal of briefs. Mr. O'Hagan was a Repealer, but a very moderate Repealer. In later years he could scarcely be said to have had any feeling with the Nationalists. He regarded them with dislike and distrust.

His conciliatory disposition, and his thoroughly sympathetic character, made him a favourite even among those who before the disestablishment were imbued with the old spirit of Protestant ascendency. When he stood for Tralee as Solicitor-General, certain Catholic Nationalists from Belfast went down to oppose his election. He felt this attack acutely; but it was more the offspring of certain individual eccen-

tricities than any disapproval of his political action on the part of his Catholic fellow-townsmen. It has been said that the heart sometimes sees farther than the head. Lord O'Hagan's singularly humane and conciliatory disposition had no inconsiderable influence in smoothing obstacles which some public men of a less generous type would have found insuperable.

It could not be said of Lord O'Hagan, as of some of his eminent contemporaries, that he owed much to Belfast. In what is now a great and prosperous city his early life had been a hard struggle. A somewhat friendless Catholic, he had to make his way under great difficulties. As Mr. Sheil once said of the penal laws, the mark remained after the manacle had been removed. This was especially the case in the North of Ireland, where there were a generation ago, and even still are, two hostile populations confronting each other, and jealously watching each other.

But Lord O'Hagan had not the least bitterness against even the extreme No Popery zealots, who regarded him as an enemy of their race and religion. He recognised their sterling qualities. He made allowance for their very strong prejudices against his Church. More truly it could be said of him, what Burke, when the two friends were on the verge of their quarrel and separation, said of Fox, there was not one drop of gall in his whole temperament. His benevolence was depicted on his countenance, in his bright dark eye, in the gentle tones of his voice, and in the lines about the mouth, in which there was

nothing of harshness, but much of unmistakable kindness.

His style of speaking was rhetorical, but it was very graceful rhetoric. The language was well chosen, and showed much literary skill. To listen to him was always a pleasure. The tones of his voice were admirably modulated. He never wearied his audience. An enthusiastic lady, who was an excellent judge of speaking, said, "Surely Lord O'Hagan is the most beautiful speaker I have ever heard." In manner, though not in matter, he resembled Sir Charles Russell, the present Lord Russell of Killowen, whose family came from the same neighbourhood of Newry, in County Down.

Of Lord O'Hagan it could be justly said that he never forgot a friend. Always ready to do acts of kindness to others, he always remembered a kindness done to himself. He had an intimate knowledge of the people of Belfast, and warmly associated himself with even their personal affairs. "Well," he would ask, "how is So-and-so?" "Is Mr. —— still in the Town Council?" "What has become of ——?" In this interest in the fortunes of others with whom he may have been formerly connected, Lord O'Hagan resembled Lord Dufferin.

Lord O'Hagan, however, with all his kindly consideration and genuine benevolence, had a somewhat quick temper. The Irish Catholic clergy, high and low, thought that with a Catholic Lord Chancellor, who was such a novelty, they could and ought through him to do anything. Bishop after bishop sent him

up lists of names for magistrates, whom he was expected without delay or inquiry to appoint. Their recommendation was, they thought, a sufficient guarantee of fitness. But the humbler clergy were even more importunate. To no one more justly could the words be used—

> He hath a tear for pity and a hand
> Open as day to melting charity.

But it never occurred to the priests who appealed to him that he could give enough. One morning, very soon after he had been appointed Chancellor, while he was sitting at breakfast, "Father Tom" was announced as waiting in the hall.

"Father Tom! Father Tom!" he said; "how long is it since he was here last?"

"Just six days, my lord."

"Oh, this is too bad!"

"No, my lord, it is being too good," said a voice from a face which appeared at the half-open door of the dining-room. And "Father Tom" had no reason to regret his importunity.

Successful as Lord O'Hagan appeared in the eyes of the world, when he first received his Chancellorship and his peerage, a dark shadow had fallen on his home in Rutland Square. His eldest daughter, herself in no good health, attended him; but it was not until some years afterwards that his life was brightened by one who shared his name and honours, and gave to them an attraction which they had not previously possessed. He seemed in his later years to

realise what Ben Jonson said of the great English Chancellor—

> Whose even thread the Fates spin round and full
> Out of their choicest and their whitest wool.

Lord Bacon soon felt in a terrible manner the vicissitudes of fortune. Lord O'Hagan died one of the most happy and enviable of men.

His first difficulty as a member of the Irish Government was the legacy they had received from their predecessors with respect to the administration of the Irish Party Processions Act.

Not long after he had been in office, the most imposing of those displays, a Fenian funeral procession, one Sunday was made in Dublin. It was the most defiant of all. Being then in the Irish capital, I was requested through a common friend to call upon Lord O'Hagan. It was the beginning of an acquaintanceship which soon ripened into intimacy, and which continued in the most unreserved manner until his death. Outside the circle of Lord O'Hagan's family, I do not know that there was one with whom he talked more confidentially and fully on Irish political affairs. Hence I am able to speak, on my own authority, with respect to his views on the Irish questions which became prominent, and with which Mr. Gladstone's Government had to deal.

That Government did not support the second reading of Mr. Johnston's Bill for repealing the Party Processions Act. They had allowed it, as a matter of courtesy, to be read a first time, but Mr. Johnston

soon found that on both sides of the House there were obstacles in the way of the progress of his favourite measure. The Lord Chancellor is, in Ireland, not only a judicial but a political officer. He is a confidential adviser of the Lord Lieutenant and the Chief Secretary. He may be considered himself a minister. Lord O'Hagan not being favourable to the repeal of the Party Processions Act, his opinion on the question had great weight with his colleagues. He had been a law officer, and had prosecuted men for violating the Act. He had been a judge who had tried and sentenced men for violating the Act. He was a Catholic who had great personal knowledge of the North of Ireland.

The fact that he was not in favour of the repeal became known. On the Sunday when the largest of these Fenian demonstrations was made, the Lord Chancellor sat in his study, with the windows overlooking the square. The music of the various bands representing different associations, the tramp of men who seemed to march in a military style, and the less distinct sounds from a large multitude could be heard. He was in an obvious state of embarrassment. "I have read," he said to his visitor, "all you have written about the repeal of the Party Processions Act; logically it is unanswerable, but Irishmen are unfortunately not governed by logic."

"Can they be successfully governed by what appears to be an injustice?"

"No, there is inequality in the administration of

the Party Processions Act; but your proposal of a complete repeal may increase the evil against which the measure was directed."

"I am of opinion that it will be very difficult in Ulster to keep the peace, if the Act continue, while such processions as the one now marching here are permitted."

"We are in a very serious dilemma; there is no doubt about it."

"If you could stop these Fenian funeral processions everything might be well."

"But we can't."

"Can Cardinal Cullen do nothing?"

"Cardinal Cullen!" Here Lord O'Hagan started and almost jumped off his seat. A very sore point had been touched. He seemed afraid of mentioning the Cardinal's name, except in a whisper. He said slowly, "People in England, and in the North of Ireland too, think that Cardinal Cullen and the Catholic bishops can do anything with their people. It is a great mistake."

It was and is a great mistake. To Fenianism Cardinal Cullen was resolutely opposed. But there were thousands of Fenians and their sympathisers on a Sunday marching in procession before the Catholic churches of Dublin, and at his own door.

The Party Processions Act had become untenable, indefensible. Lord O'Hagan and some of his colleagues opposed to the repeal gave way. The Act was afterwards repealed with the support of Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues. The best opportunity

was lost. After the delay, the Orangemen, never much in love with a Liberal administration, were only too ready under the advice of their leaders to say, "Thank you for nothing."

It is right to state, however, that none of those who from a Liberal point of view in Ulster advocated the repeal of that measure had any reason to regret what they did. The liberty thus given was not abused. There were fewer defiant processions of Orangemen, and fewer collisions between the humbler classes of Protestants and Catholics, than there had ever been while the Act continued in force. A better feeling began to grow up between the two parties.

This improvement was in a considerable measure owing to the disestablishment of the Irish State Church. Churches do not like to be disestablished. The process in the operation necessarily appears harsh to those who are affected, but when it is accomplished, it may be found that independence has its advantages. Irish Protestant Churchmen continued indeed for some years to rail at the traitor Gladstone. The bitter feeling which the mention of his name roused in many of them was almost incomprehensible to his supporters. A visit to the North of Ireland on Mr. Gladstone's part began to be talked about; it was, however, when first suggested, deprecated by his Ulster friends. They were afraid of the antagonism which it was at the time likely to provoke.

One evening while the possibility of such a visit

was being discussed at a dinner-table of a most respectable merchant of Belfast, himself a Liberal, as his family had been for generations, a guest became much excited. This gentleman had not been originally a member of the disestablished Church; he had joined it with other relatives. Knowing that he was speaking in the presence of Ulster Liberals who had themselves done what they could to carry out Mr. Gladstone's policy on this question, he said, "If Mr. Gladstone should come to Belfast, I should myself go among the boys of Sandy Row, and do all I could to get them to murder him. Yes, to murder him, to murder him!" This was not said, as it might be charitable to surmise, under the influence of wine. It was pure, simple, Tory Protestant fanaticism in the cause of the disestablished Church.

Just at this time, when the Irish Church Act had become law, the death of Admiral Seymour, cousin of the then Marquis of Hertford, caused a vacancy in the representation of the county of Antrim. Lord Hertford, the fourth marquis, was himself an absentee landlord. He resided in his magnificent villa, La Bagatelle, in the Bois de Boulogne of Paris, almost overlooking the race-course. Strange stories, some of them doubtless much exaggerated, were told of the marquis's cynicism, dissipation, contempt of public opinion, and indifference to his duties as a large Irish landed proprietor. It was said that he had only been once on a visit to his Irish estates. This was during Sir Robert Peel's Government, when the

marquis wanted the Garter, soon after he had succeeded his father. He did go over to Lisburn at that time. While looking round from a high hill on the fine land of which he was the proprietor, he was reported to have said, "Well, I like this country so well, that I shall never come into it any more." He was as good as his word. More than a quarter of a century had passed away; but the tenants had during all that time never seen their noble landlord's face. The marquis was now in declining health. The last thing reported of him was, that on looking out of his windows at La Bagatelle during a review, he saw an officer present dressed in the English uniform he had himself worn in his youth. He burst into tears.

The estate had for many years been managed by Dean Stannus, a Dean of the Irish Church. The management had indeed been superintended by Mr. Croker, who audited the accounts, and whose devotion to the third Marquis of Hertford, the Lord Monmouth delineated in *Coningsby*, is so well known. Mr. Croker long represented the neighbouring borough of Downpatrick. People with English notions of clerical dignitaries had some difficulty in reconciling the two offices of a dean of an Established Church and the management of a large estate for an absentee nobleman. They could not help expressing surprise that the Temple and the money-changer should be thus associated. But after all, his clerical character was some restraint on the dean in the marquis's rent-office at Lisburn. The tenants probably fared better

under him than under a merely secular agent anxious to make the most of delegated power.

A branch railway between Antrim and Lisburn long remained incomplete. During one of the last years of his agency of the Hertford estates, the aged Dean Stannus made a journey to Paris to induce his principal to advance £15,000 to finish a work which was expected to be very advantageous to his tenantry. The marquis, it was said, not only refused to comply with the request, but even to see the dean, who had to return to Lisburn without having been favoured by an interview with the noble sybarite. Many stories of a similar character were told. That they should have been in circulation at all showed the appreciation of the great absentee's character on and near the estate from which he derived so much. The dean had recently been succeeded in his worldly office by his son, Mr. Walter Stannus.

From the Hertford estates round Lisburn, nearly at the close of the last century, there was an income of about eight thousand a year. At the time when this new election for the county of Antrim occurred, a very memorable election of its kind, the value of the Hertford estates had enormously increased. This great improvement had been mainly produced by the outlay and industry of the tenants during what might be considered three generations of absentee landlords.

When Admiral Seymour's resignation of his seat for the County Antrim was announced, a successor,

another Seymour, was put forward. This was Captain Hugh De Grey Seymour, then of the Grenadier Guards, and son of the next Marquis of Hertford. It was believed by some of those who were most eager to accept Captain Seymour as the Conservative candidate that he would as a matter of course one day succeed to the large Hertford estates, which they thought would go with the title. They did not imagine that so much wealth and territorial influence would be diverted to another quarter. The agent, and all whom he could influence, were eager to worship what they thought to be the rising sun. The changes were rung on A Seymour! A Seymour! But the selection of Captain Seymour as the Conservative candidate was not made without some discontent and even objection. A son of Sir Francis Macnaghten was mentioned as better known in the country, where indeed Captain Seymour was not known at all until his election address was issued. In that address, though it was understood that the land question would have to be dealt with by the Government in the next session of Parliament, not a single word about it was said. The Irish Church Act, which had just become law, was condemned. The measure was curiously referred to as the Disestablishment and Disendowment of the United Church of Great Britain and Ireland. But the candidate, while appealing almost exclusively to the large constituency of Ulster tenant farmers, made no mention of the impending reform of Irish land tenure. This, however, had now become the great question of the day, of the hour.

It was of course thought that there would be no contest. Notwithstanding the dissatisfaction his candidature caused among the Conservatives of Antrim, Captain Seymour's election was regarded by most of them at first as a matter of course. But they were mistaken. When the vacancy in autumn occurred, Sir Shafto Adair was in Scotland. As soon as he heard of it he said to a friend, "I shall contest the seat."

He was as good as his word. A few days afterwards he came to the North of Ireland, and attended a meeting of his political friends. They were not at all sanguine respecting his electoral prospects. To contest an Ulster county immediately after the passing of the Church Act seemed almost hopeless on the part of any Liberal. This was the opinion generally given by those who were consulted. It was, however, added, that there might be unknown elements which could only be discovered if the experiment were tried.

Sir Shafto immediately issued his address, and began to hold meetings in all important districts of the county. He spoke with much ingenuity and ability, and especially with reference to the land question, on which he had not long before published an interesting pamphlet. His rival scarcely attended any meeting. He depended on the name of Seymour and territorial influence. Those were elements which were very manifest; the other, the unknown elements, did not show themselves at all.

When Lord Cairns and Mr. Disraeli gave way on the Church question, many of their Irish supporters

and nearly all the Irish Conservative newspapers were furious. They spoke and wrote as though the leaders in Parliament had betrayed them, and had no further claim on their allegiance. Their language could on some points, indeed, scarcely be distinguished from that of the most extreme Nationalist newspapers. Lord Cairns and Mr. Disraeli, for agreeing to what was called a compromise, were said to be as bad as the traitor Gladstone himself. "Never, no, never!" it was declared, "could they any longer expect Protestant support."

No sooner, however, had the contest in the county begun, than those threats of opposition to the Conservative party as then led ceased. The Antrim Tories, the Orangemen, and the Conservative landlords were exhorted through their newspapers to rally round Captain Seymour. Sir Shafto Adair was himself a Churchman. He had been appointed member of a Church Commission by the late Government. He could therefore scarcely be regarded as an enemy. But all the Conservative and Orange Associations were called vigorously into action to prevent, as was said, the great county of Antrim being disgraced by the return of a Liberal.

Yet the Conservative candidate, with all the support of the two great houses of Seymour and O'Neill, did not gain favour in the constituency. Tenant farmers in large numbers attended Sir Shafto Adair's meetings and cheered him to the echo. In the reception given to Captain Seymour there was a passive sullenness which caused alarm to the Conservative

agents. A meeting was held to consider the advisability of withdrawing the young officer and substituting Lord Claud John Hamilton, who was well known in the North of Ireland, had been defeated by Serjeant Dowse in the city of Derry, and was generally popular. The project was, however, abandoned. It was recognised that to substitute one Conservative candidate for another in the midst of the struggle would be an unmistakable confession of weakness.

The less hold Captain Seymour had on the constituency the more resolute became the efforts to secure his return. The old electioneering arts were revived, and especially that of breaking up of public meetings held by the Liberal candidate.

This was in several places attempted with more or less success. A meeting of Captain Seymour's supporters was held in Belfast for the purpose, as was announced, of giving the gallant officer an opportunity of declaring his principles. The way this was carried out was by a mob ascending the platform, and insisting on the reporters of the principal newspapers supporting Sir Shafto Adair being turned out. One of those reporters appealed to Mr. Walter Stannus, as a magistrate, for protection; this that gentleman declared he was unable to afford. The chairman also confessed that he was powerless, and advised the obnoxious Liberal reporters to withdraw. This they at last did, but not without receiving very rough treatment as they left.

But the most efficient agency relied on for the return of the candidate opposed to the Irish Church

Act and the reform of the Irish land system was the machinery of the rent offices, with the estate agents and the bailiffs. This was systematically and vigorously employed. During the contest, Sir Shafto Adair publicly announced that his tenants on the Ballymena estate were free to vote as they pleased, that he would put no pressure upon them whatever. He called on the agents of the Hertford and O'Neill estates, and the Conservative landlords generally, to follow his example. He asked them to let it be known that their tenants were at liberty to vote according to their convictions, and what they might believe to be their interests. No reply was given to this appeal. It was, on the contrary, very well understood that the tenants on the estates of the Antrim Conservative landlords were to vote as they were directed by the agents or the bailiffs. The following is one of the circulars issued by an agent of a great nobleman in the county:—

"Dear Sir,

"Enclosed is a note from Captain Seymour, the Conservative candidate. I hope you will not find it inconsistent with your duty to give him your vote and interest.

"The polling day is Thursday, 19th August.

"I am, Sir, your obedient servant."

The tenants who received this missive, hoping that they would not find it inconsistent with their duty to vote for Captain Seymour, well knew what was meant by this intimation. They well knew that it

was implied to be their duty to vote for the candidate suggested by their landlords, when their tenant right had no legal protection and they were but tenants at will.

The day of nomination came. The Antrim Court House was, evidently, as was said, with the connivance of some officials, early in the morning taken possession of by a large number of undisguised rowdies. It was obvious that they had received their pay for this service beforehand, and that they had been well supplied with strong drink. They applauded Captain Seymour, whom they had never before seen, to the echo. But when Sir Shafto Adair showed himself, they shook their fists, waved their orange handkerchiefs, and brandished their cudgels in the wildest manner. Hell itself appeared to have broken loose. Fortunately the stone gallery which did duty for a hustings was far above the heads of these raging offscourings of the streets, professing to be electors of the county of Antrim. One of Sir Shafto's supporters, as he looked down on the roaring mob below, said, "Well, Sir Shafto, what do you think of this scene?"

"I have never seen anything like it."

"How many elections have you contested?"

"This," Sir Shafto said with a laugh, "is the thirteenth."

"You have seen some rowdyism at English elections?"

"Yes, but nothing resembling this. It is appalling."

Captain Seymour was returned by a majority of more than two to one. The tenant farmers virtually made no fight in their own cause. To see men who had been applauding Sir Shafto Adair at his various meetings throughout the county afterwards conducted to the poll by the bailiffs on the estates to vote for Captain Seymour was a melancholy sight. This was, however, what several reporters who afterwards stated the fact saw. Though he was their landlord, some three hundred tenants near Ballymena voted against Sir Shafto Adair. By the Tory newspapers this was cited as a proof that the Liberal candidate was not the favourite with the tenant farmers whose cause he asserted. No similar instance of independence was recorded on the estates of the great Conservative landlords. Their tenants might politically agree with the owners of the soil, but not differ from them. On the declaration of the poll, at which there was a similar exhibition of intolerant rowdyism to that which was more outrageously displayed on the nomination day, the Liberal candidate publicly stated that his defeat was owing to an almost unprecedented abuse of territorial influence. Sir Shafto contemplated presenting a petition against the return, but, as even if it had been successful the electoral result from a party point of view could not have been altered, he was persuaded by a friend to whom he wrote on the subject to abandon his intention.

This election deserves all the more attention as it was the last in the North of Ireland under the

old system. When the hired mob were conducting themselves in so scandalous a manner on the nomination day, and when all the influence which could be exerted over tenants was employed to return Captain Seymour, a warning was given that this was the last time such an abuse of electoral privileges would probably be permitted. It was the last time. Before another session of Parliament was over, the first great Irish Land Act was passed. In the following year the Ballot Act was also passed. Thus elections may be said in Ulster to have become free. Since that time, whatever intimidation there has been in Ireland at Parliamentary elections, has seldom been on the part of the landlords. It has been used on another side. Some of those who most loudly called out for protection to the voters have not been indisposed to act in a manner contrary, as in the case of illiterate voters, to the spirit of the Ballot Act.

The election of Belfast in the November, 1868, and that of Antrim in the August of 1869, show a curious and instructive contrast. In the one we see the independence of the more democratic Orangemen, even when the question of the disestablishment of the Irish Protestant Church was before the constituencies. In the other we see the utter want of independence on the part of many of the sturdy tenant farmers of Ulster, who, while professedly devoted to the cause of civil and religious liberty, could do nothing in what was acknowledged to be their own cause. In the heat of the contest, Captain Seymour declared that he had the greatest possible objection to the

ballot. This very election plainly demonstrated its necessity. To give citizens privileges which they are not at liberty freely to exercise for their own protection is worse than allowing them no such privileges at all. It is a mockery. It is to place men boasting of their constitutional freedom in the position of the Scottish tyrant's subjects, forced to render that lip homage which the poor heart would fain deny but dare not.

They who called upon the tenants on the Hertford estates to vote for a Seymour as their present and future Lord experienced a cruel disappointment. The marquis soon afterwards died at his Parisian residence. The greater Hertford estate was left, not to the inheritor of the title, but to Sir Richard Wallace. There was litigation about the possession; but the provisions of the will could not be upset. This led to a great change in the management of the estate and the position of the tenants. Some of those who during the late election were such staunch adherents of the house of Seymour, until the result of the litigation became known, denounced Sir Richard Wallace as an unprincipled adventurer who had practised on the weakness of the old marquis. They cared nothing for that comprehensive philanthropy which had bridged the Channel and embraced two great capitals. Their new landlord became their protector and their friend, whose memory is still cherished over a wide extent of country, and whose statue deservedly adorns the town of Lisburn, which he did much to develop and improve.

In his address of thanks to the electors, Captain Seymour spoke of his future connection with the constituency. On the death of the marquis the new member for Antrim became Earl of Yarmouth. By the time the next general election came round, it was acknowledged that there had been a great change, that the first Land Act and the Ballot Act had greatly altered the political situation. Captain Seymour, as Earl of Yarmouth, did not again present himself to the choice of the electors of Antrim. He had recourse to an English seat. A very short time produced almost a revolution in the North of Ireland. It will be shown how the tenants became free and what use they made of their freedom.

CHAPTER XI

1870

The Expected Irish Land Bill of 1870—Agitation among Tenant Farmers in Ulster—Ballymena Conference—The Ulster Settlements — Stories of Confiscation by Landlords — The Ulster Tenants—Want of Public Spirit—The Irish Presbyterian Clergy—The Effect of the *Regium Donum*—Former Proposals for the Reform of Irish Land Tenure—The Land Bill of 1870—Dual Ownership—Comparative Failure of the 1870 Land Act—A Peace Preservation Act.

EARLY in the autumn of 1869 it was stated that Mr. Gladstone would soon call his colleagues together in order that the promised Irish Land Bill should be carefully considered. Meetings in favour of the measure the Government were expected to introduce began to be held in many parts of Ulster. The most important of these, which was called a Conference, took place late in the year at Ballymena. Sir Shafto Adair, the defeated candidate for Antrim, presided. He was received with enthusiasm; but many of the tenant farmers were in his own neighbourhood, and of course among his own tenantry. The late contest, whatever might be the immediate result, had powerfully stimulated the agitation on the land question

Sir Shafto had said, "However this election may terminate, I believe it will have as important consequences as that of Clare, which forced on Catholic emancipation." The Antrim election, as was said at this Ballymena meeting, was undoubtedly forcing on the emancipation of the Ulster tenant farmers. There may have been exaggeration in Sir Shafto's language, and perhaps a little of the pardonable vanity somewhat characteristic of this kindly gentleman. But the effect of the contest had undoubtedly been great.

It was obvious in all the meetings then being held. It was perhaps more manifest in this great conference at Ballymena, in which the principal speakers were men who in the election of the summer had taken an active part on the Liberal side, and were in some degree smarting under that signal but very explicable defeat. Forty Conservative landlords were invited to attend, but one and all declined. Some of them did not acknowledge their invitations. It was said by their advocates that the agitation, though nominally to obtain justice to the tenants, was really a conspiracy to drive out the Protestant landlords. It was nothing of the kind. Many of the men then present showed afterwards, when the Home Rule movement began, and when they were subjected to all the temptations of the Land League, how devoted they were to the Union and what sacrifices they could make in its cause. But one distinguished county magistrate thought fit to declare that instead of asking the Government and the Legislature for

Land Bills, they had better adhere to the teaching of their Bibles, which they in his opinion were disposed to forget. He was answered by references to Naboth's vineyard, Virgil's deprecation of evictions in the ninth Eclogue, *Haec mea sunt, veteres migrate coloni*, and the conditions on which the Ulster settlements had been made, especially by James the First and his Privy Council. One of the articles was quoted. It was that "the said undertakers shall not demise any part of their lands at will only, but shall make certain estates for life in taille or fee simple." The Ulster tenant-right in the first resolution was declared to consist in buildings, improvements, and reclaiming. The property thus created, without the assistance but with the sanction of the landlords, ought, the resolution affirmed, to be secured by legal enactment to the tenants. The establishment of a general Court of Equity to decide on disputed questions between landlord and tenant was also recommended. The tribunal was to be supplemented by local courts.

The resolution to this effect was proposed by the present writer. It was in the following terms: "That a special court should be established, one in each province, to frame rules and regulations, in equity for plaints arising between owner and occupier and for such matters as were specified in the third resolution." This third resolution admitted that, while the tenant ought to have adequate security of tenure on payment of rent, he might be dispossessed in cases of great public improvement. The various resolutions were carried with great enthusiasm. Not a word was said

in them about land purchase, either compulsory or voluntary. It was indeed objected to the first resolution, defining tenant right, that it was too narrow, that it said nothing at all about good will. There were reasonable grounds for this objection. But the reserve on this question of good will, really an essential part of the Ulster tenant right, showed how anxious the framers of the resolutions were not to go to even the appearance of extremes. Read in the light of subsequent land legislation, extending over twenty-one years from Mr. Gladstone's Bill, which was carried in the next session of Parliament, to Mr. Balfour's Land Purchase Act in the session of 1891, those proposals at the Ballymena conference will now be generally admitted to have been singularly fair, moderate, and practical.

In the course of the speeches supporting the resolutions, instances were given of the manner in which rents were sometimes raised on the tenants' improvements. A tenant had built a mill by an expenditure of £200, money which he had borrowed at five per cent. He had made a lake out of a useless stream, and brought the water down to work the mill. The agent of the landlord at once raised the improving tenant's rent by £10 a year. Another tenant made two limekilns, on which, and on the quarry for material, he spent £300. He was ready to pay the landlord a royalty, but this was not thought sufficient. The bailiff came round, and this other improving tenant found his rent raised by £10 a year. A family had resided for 150 years on an

estate in the neighbourhood of Ballymena. By that family the land had been reclaimed, the dwelling house and the offices built, and everything done that had been done for the farm. The tenant was then a widow, greatly reduced in circumstances and seventy years of age. A neighbour offered her £250 for her interest in the farm, and herself a free house for life. The office had given her liberty to sell to a neighbour, but the landlord, from whom a letter was read at the meeting, objected to this particular neighbour. Another was suggested. Thus instead of obtaining her £250 for her farm and £100 for her chattels and being made independent for the short time she had to live, she only received £100 in all, and was then living a pauper dependant on the charity of her neighbours. The distinguished magistrate who recommended the Antrim farmers present at the meeting to read their Bibles, might have remembered that in the Divine Book itself something is said in favour of the widows and the orphans, and something not very favourable to their oppressors.

Such instances as these, and they were in the mouths of all those who attended the conference, produced a great effect in Ulster. It has been said of the Brahmin, that to deprive him of his caste is to deprive him of his all. To an Ulster farmer his tenant right was his all. He was most anxious it should have legal protection.

Of many of those Ulster tenants it might be said that they looked at political questions very much

according to what they believed to be their own interests. Sometimes, though calling themselves Liberals, they had apparently less public spirit than the Orangemen. They considered every question from the point of view of their own farms. They appeared to think of no other. Much, however, can be said in their excuse. Their forefathers had been sent over to do a great work of colonisation, and it was admitted that they had done their work well. When the occupiers under whatever name were given votes, without in Ulster possessing any security of tenure, they became more and more dependent on the landlords. They were far away from the great industrial and populous centres of the kingdom. They were left to themselves with very little sympathy, except when they could be used as voting machines. The Episcopal clergy, before the disestablishment, generally made common cause with the landlords. The Presbyterian clergy, most of whom were either farmers' sons or more remotely the descendants of farmers, were more associated with the tenants, and were with them in favour of a thorough reform in Irish land tenure. But they were for the most part poor. The *Regium Donum*, on which many of them had so much depended, amounted to about twenty-six shillings a week for each congregation. When there were disputes new congregations were encouraged to start with this small *Regium Donum*. It had a paralysing effect on voluntary contributions. It prevented from being cultivated the habit of giving, which Burke told his youthful son and his companion

when in France, not to lose.[1] The *Regium Donum*, though called an endowment, depended on an annual vote of the House of Commons, but it was no longer carried as a matter of course. It was not enough to maintain the ministers; but it checked the contributions of the people. "Ah, he has the *Donum*," a Presbyterian tenant farmer in Ulster would say when reminded that he might contribute more liberally to his clergyman. Thus he reconciled his conscience with his Scotch canniness, his penurious habits. A deputation which waited upon Mr. Gladstone, as upon other statesmen, for an increase of the *Regium Donum* was asked by him what the largest amount was that any Irish Presbyterian clergyman received from what might be called all spiritual sources. The answer was, "Six hundred pounds a year." "Dear me," he remarked, "that is very little.

Little as it was, even this was exceptional. It was only in the towns with large Presbyterian congregations, and when one resource was added to another, that any individual Presbyterian clergyman in Ireland had such an income. A controversy was going on respecting sustentation and commutation in the Irish Presbyterian Church. A few of those clergymen who were, with the Conservatives, opposed to Mr. Gladstone's Irish Church policy, declined to commute. They were the exceptions.

But even those exceptions to the larger and more

[1] See Burke's letter to Mr. Rich. Burke, jun., and Mr. T. King, Paris, Feb. 1773.

public-spirited body could take up no antagonistic position to the movement for Irish land reform. Notwithstanding the result of the Antrim election, the agitation had become general. It had been stimulated by evictions, of which there is no record before the year 1849. It was then thought to be a good policy to render evictions easier and to encourage contracts. As a fact it was in Ulster quite impossible to establish the relations of landlord and tenant on the basis of contract, as was sought partially to effect by an Act of 1851, and by another in 1860, when Mr. Cardwell, as Lord Palmerston's Irish Chief Secretary, thought that he had settled the Irish land question at once and for ever.

In 1849 13,384 families had been evicted; in the following year, 14,546. For some years afterwards the numbers were less, but still sufficiently formidable. The promised Land Act of the session of 1870 was expected to diminish the number of evictions, and indeed to render them impossible, except for non-payment of rent.

In Ulster the tenant farmers looked forward with much impatience to the meeting of Parliament. The measure on which Mr. Gladstone first consulted his colleagues early in the previous autumn was not ready to be laid before Parliament until the month of February. There is good authority for stating that the resolutions and speeches at the Ballymena meeting were carefully considered by some of Mr. Gladstone's colleagues who were especially interested in the measure, and supposed to

be especially acquainted with Ulster, and with the Ulster tenant-right, which to most Englishmen and Scotchmen at that time, as well as to the Irish Southern tenant farmers, was, and even perhaps still is, a mystery. A great meeting in Cork was held in favour of Irish land legislation; there was also a general conference in Dublin, to which some of the leading tenant-right advocates in Ulster were invited. It was not, however, until the fifteenth of February, 1870, that Mr. Gladstone introduced the Land Bill.

By the first clause, the usages prevalent in the province of Ulster known generally as the Ulster tenant-right custom were declared to be legal. As the Bill was introduced, the word usage instead of the plural "usages" was employed. The alteration was regarded with much suspicion by the Ulster farmers, because it seemed to legalise the arbitrary regulations on particular estates, limiting the amount to be paid by an incoming tenant for the tenant right. In the absence of the custom, or when the tenant chose not to claim under it, he was awarded compensation for disturbance according to a fixed scale; but this compensation was under no circumstances to exceed the sum of £250. He was also with certain exceptions declared to be entitled to compensation for improvements made by himself or by his predecessors in title: but the limitation was generally to twenty years. The amount of compensation was to be fixed by the Civil Bill Court, or, with the consent of both parties, by a Court of Arbitration.

Then in addition to these provisions, there were what were popularly called the Bright Clauses, under which advances were to be made to tenants desirous of purchasing their holdings, not exceeding two-thirds of the purchase money, to be repaid at five per cent. in thirty-five years.

The measure, represented by its great sponsor Mr. Gladstone as permanent, has had again and again to be supplemented by other Land Bills of a still bolder character. Yet the Bill at the time was justly considered as sufficiently sweeping and even revolutionary. A very distinguished Ulster nobleman, who knew thoroughly both the Church and the land questions, wrote to a friend in Belfast: "There is one consolation you have. You have taken a great part, a greater than ever will be known, in carrying the two most tremendous measures of our time." The Irish Church Act and this Land Act were indeed thought to be tremendous measures. Even as the mind is thrown back with due knowledge of all the circumstances to the time when they were introduced, they may yet appear tremendous.

The Land Act of 1870 disappointed the expectations formed of it when carried. In some degree it may be considered to have been a failure. It did not accomplish all, nor anything like all, anticipated from it when it became law. Why it thus comparatively failed will be afterwards considered. While it was just coming into operation another Irish question demanded the attention of the Government and the Legislature. The Irish Land Bill had

by Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues to be immediately followed by a Peace Preservation Act, which had also afterwards to be renewed. Thus as will be seen, not for the first nor for the last time, concession had to be followed by what is now called coercion.

CHAPTER XII

1870

Tory Fenianism — Mr. Isaac Butt — Lord O'Hagan and Dr. Butler, Catholic Bishop of Limerick—A Sunday Dinner Party—"What will become of me?"—Bishop Dorrian—Claim for English Colonies—Lord O'Hagan at the Working Men's Institute in Belfast—Created Baron O'Hagan of Tullahogue —Irish Tories and the Fenians—Judge Keogh's Judgment in the Galway Election Petition—Dr. Dorrian's Indignation —Mr. Gladstone and the Disestablishment of the Church in Wales—A Great Change.

THE indignation of some of the more ardent of the Irish Conservatives at the passing of the Irish Church Act had, as has been stated, induced them to use what seemed a strange language. It could only be characterised as Tory Fenianism. Mr. Gladstone had advocated and carried his Irish Church Act and his Irish Land Act as two parts of a great policy, which he had, in referring to one of those measures, called a message of peace. There were, however, influential people in Ireland ready enough, though with much unpatriotic short-sightedness, to do all they could to make this message of peace a failure. Among them there were even professors in Trinity College depend-

ing on its Protestant endowments. Among them was Mr. Isaac Butt, himself a Trinity College man, an eminent Queen's Counsel, who had been regarded as a strong Conservative, and who had been returned as a Tory and, as was said, an Orangeman to the Dublin City Corporation.

From causes which it is not necessary to mention, Mr. Butt had for some time lost whatever popularity he possessed with the party with which he had been long connected. His great ability as an advocate was acknowledged; his kindly personal qualities were as fully recognised. As an advocate he never took an unfair advantage, and he could be generous. He had defended Mr. Smith O'Brien and the earlier Fenians. But he occupied an almost isolated position when he had lately been called upon with another Conservative lawyer, Mr. Falkiner, to defend the last Fenian prisoners. This they did with characteristic zeal, which procured for them the enthusiastic approval of the men who were now organising Sunday funeral processions in memory of Allen, O'Brien, and Larkin. They found themselves escorted home by large crowds and serenaded.

Mr. Falkiner, who only played the second part in the defence of the misguided men, remained true to his Conservative principles, and some years afterwards was appointed Recorder of Dublin. The popularity which he had achieved among the Fenians, and those who without being actual Fenians were moving in the same direction, appears to have induced Mr. Butt to enter into some kind of com-

promise between his old Tory Orangeism and the new Nationalism which he soon afterwards called Home Rule. He had certainly very little sympathy with the Pope or with Irish Catholicism. In the Dublin Corporation he had been one of the ablest opponents of O'Connell and his Repeal movement. As a Conservative, and almost something more, he had, while becoming the leader in a Nationalist movement, the satisfaction of thwarting Mr. Gladstone and his Irish remedial policy. Hence Mr. Isaac Butt, with few settled convictions, became at this time the leader of the movement which was to develop into strongly pronounced Nationalism, and to get as much beyond his control as the Young Irelanders in the last years of his life went beyond O'Connell.

Isaac Butt was always at heart a Conservative. He was never a Whig, never in the ordinary party sense a Liberal. This fact it is necessary to keep in mind while considering the last years of his chequered life.

Yet he was a man of great industry, and of great industry for no selfish objects. He took a great interest at this time in the Irish land question, from the Ulster as well as the general point of view. This was natural enough in one who was born in an Ulster county, Donegal. In his neat, small, and precise hand he wrote many private and lengthy communications on the Irish land question, generally of a practical and not at all of an extreme character. He soon afterwards began to be called the "Father of Home Rule;" but as its "Father" he was also generally moderate, carefully avoiding, so far as he

could, and especially when they were in office, offence to his old Conservative friends. He might always be considered their unavowed ally against Mr. Gladstone and the Liberals.

He visited the North of Ireland in the autumn of 1870. There was the prospect of a vacancy in the borough of Newry, through the serious illness of the veteran Presbyterian Mr. Kirk, who had won the seat for the Liberal party. It was known that the election would be strongly contested in the Conservative interest. Mr. Butt waited on me as an editor who, though opposed to his Home Rule policy, sympathised with his efforts in the cause of the Irish tenant farmers. Jovial and apparently frank, after dining with some acquaintances at a club in Belfast, Mr. Butt appeared in the editor's room, held out his right hand, and said, "Well, how are you?"

"Pretty well, how are you?"

"More than well; extremely flourishing."

"Are you going to contest Newry? Go in for a moderate Liberal policy, be friendly to the Government, and we shall support you."

"I shall never sit in Parliament until we have one in College Green."

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure."

Mr. Butt was not the only Home Ruler who gave a similar pledge and afterwards forgot it. A year afterwards he was returned to the House of Commons at Westminster for the city of Limerick.

Side by side with Mr. Butt's moderate Home Rule

movement the Fenian agitation continued. It assumed several forms. Amnesty meetings succeeded seditious funeral processions. The familiar cry, the release of the Fenians as political prisoners, was now raised. It was the cause of embarrassment to Mr. Gladstone's Irish officials, who were doing what they could, in spite of Mr. Butt and the Home Rulers, to give effect to the message of peace. To Mr. Butt Mr. Gladstone wrote a letter, which excited much attention at the time, and in which his supporters in the North of Ireland heartily concurred. One sentence from the letter was especially quoted with approbation: "To rise against the Government of this country, and against public order, is," said Mr. Gladstone, "ever a great crime; to permit it would be one not less great."

The election of O'Donovan Rossa for Tipperary immediately afterwards was a significant Fenian reply to the Prime Minister's letter. It caused much uneasiness to Lord O'Hagan and his colleagues in the Irish administration. To a friend, whom he had invited to go to Dublin from Belfast to spend his Saturdays and Sundays when circumstances permitted, the Lord Chancellor spoke with much soreness of this election. "It is," he said, "really too bad." So thought the Catholic bishops generally, and especially Lord O'Hagan's friend Dr. Butler, Bishop of Limerick. On the Sunday just as that election was taking place this prelate was on a visit to Lord O'Hagan. While the Chancellor was engaged in his library, the bishop and the other guest

were left to themselves very much during the morning. At luncheon he apologised for his absence. "I have been," he said, "preparing some judgments for to-morrow: this must be my excuse."

The bishop, professing to look very grave, remarked, "What say the laws of the Church to this?"

"Servile work, my lord," was the Chancellor's apologetic reply.

"Really, Chancellor, you are as bad as O'Donovan Rossa," said the bishop. The Most Reverend Dr. Butler deprecated O'Donovan Rossa's election in emphatic terms. On his way to Dublin he had passed through the scene of the contest, and spoke of what he had witnessed with much regret and apprehension. He condemned indeed the Home Rule movement itself, and showed with it not the least sympathy.

That evening, when the bishop and the other guest went down to Lord O'Hagan's marine residence at Clontarf, the bishop was even more emphatic in his condemnation of the National agitation in all its ramifications, in all its phases. He knew he was speaking in the presence of at least one Protestant journalist and a Liberal; but he spoke with no reserve. There were present besides the bishop, the guest alluded to, the Chancellor, his son-in-law Mr. John O'Hagan, afterwards the judge in the Land Court, and another relative who held an appointment under the Crown. Not one person present at the table that Sunday evening had a word to say in favour of the agitation headed by Mr. Butt.

"It seems to me," said the Protestant guest, "that the English people may get tired of hearing this Home Rule cry. Some day or other they may surrender to it out of mere weariness and ignorance. Conscious of good intentions, it is hard for a great and free people to be persistently misrepresented. I confess I sometimes think it would be a just punishment to many of these Home Rulers to give them even more than they ask for: to hold only a few important strategical points, and from all other parts of Ireland to withdraw the English garrisons. There are many Irishmen who, though now denouncing English rule, would see with regret the retreating standards of England."

"You mean then," said the bishop, "that England should virtually give up the country and abandon us to ourselves?"

"Not exactly but very near it."

"What under such circumstances would become of me?" asked the Lord Chancellor.

"And what would become of me?" said his son-in-law, the Queen's Counsel.

"And what would become of me?" said the Chancellor's other relative present.

"Don't you write anything like this in your paper, as a Liberal organ," said Mr. John O'Hagan; "you might do a great deal of mischief."

"A great deal," emphasized the Chancellor.

Lord O'Hagan, as has been said, had been a junior counsel for O'Connell in the celebrated trial. Mr. John O'Hagan had written some spirited contributions

to what might be called Irish National literature. The other connection of the family present was also understood to have at least Home Rule sympathies. The bishop himself was at all events a Southern Irishman, sharing more or less the same opinions. But they all deprecated the withdrawal of the British troops and the concession of an Irish Parliament and Government over which the Imperial Parliament and Government would have no control. They did not wish Ireland to be given up to herself.

In going up to Dublin the next morning from Clontarf, the bishop, while recommending some of his Catholic friends to the Chancellor for magisterial appointments, still spoke against Irish Nationalism. "This man," he said, "you can depend upon, he is sensible and moderate."

Some years afterwards, Bishop Butler made a public declaration in favour of Home Rule. This fact was called to Lord O'Hagan's attention by the Protestant gentleman who had been present at the dinner when the Most Rev. Dr. Butler condemned the movement, and was alarmed at O'Donovan Rossa's nomination for Tipperary.

"Did you read what the bishop has said?" Lord O'Hagan was asked.

"Oh yes! I was angry with him about it, and even wrote to him on the subject."

"What was his reply?"

He said, "We must go with our people."

"We must go with our people." These are very significant words. They ought to be well considered

by all who would really understand Ireland. The common Protestant notion is that the Irish Catholic bishops and their clergy can lead their people very much as they please, that they have only to give the word of command and it is sure to be obeyed. This is an error, and it is at the root of many vulgar prejudices respecting the relations between the Irish Catholic bishops and priests, and the laity on whom they so much depend, and against whom they are very seldom likely to put themselves in determined opposition. On the education question the Irish bishops undoubtedly took the lead, and insisted on compliance with their denominational views. On this question they had and have no option whatever. The command came from the Vatican, and it had to be literally obeyed.

On the Home Rule question, however, and on others not directly affecting religion, the Irish Catholic bishops and their priests do not lead. Where the people go, they will go. They cannot long afford to lag behind. This is perfectly well understood.

The first Catholic Chancellor's house was the common rendezvous of the bishops when their affairs called them to Dublin. To them it was quite a new thing to have such a place of call, and the opportunity of consulting with the head of the law in Ireland, and one of the high officials of the Irish Government. Judge Christian might continue to growl; but outside certain legal circles his growling produced little effect. The bishops generally were satisfied with their Chancellor. As they were on their way to Rome, to the Council, seven Irish Catholic bishops dined one

evening in the Chancellor's house. To meet so many of these Catholic dignitaries, confidentially and yet unreservedly, was a new and almost unexampled experience to a Protestant. Several of them, like Dr. Butler himself, had no love for the new Home Rule movement under Isaac Butt, whom they distrusted, and perhaps not without good reason. Sooner or later, however, like Dr. Butler, they had all to go with their people.

At the Chancellor's house it was somewhat remarkable that Dr. Dorrian, then Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor, was not to be met. Though they had common Ulster associations, the Chancellor and the bishop never appeared to be on good terms with each other. Dr. Dorrian had been educated at Downpatrick under a well-known Unitarian schoolmaster, Dr. Nelson. But the teaching to which he had been subjected was far from liberalising his mind. He had succeeded in his bishopric the moderate and conciliatory Dr. Denvir, whom the Protestants generally spoke of with respect and regret. It used to be said that in Dr. Denvir's time Catholics and Orangemen were to be seen marching together on the great anniversary, the twelfth of July, and that there was then no disposition on either side to give or to take offence.

However this may have been, Dr. Dorrian when he became Bishop of Down and Connor showed himself animated with a different spirit. He certainly did not profess to love the Protestants, nor the Whigs nor the Liberals. He even called himself

occasionally a Conservative, and before the Irish Church Act professed to think more highly of that party than of the one which was now led by Mr. Gladstone. But he was a Nationalist, much more Nationalist than most of the Irish Catholic bishops. It was some time afterwards noticed that though Cardinal Cullen had prevented his clergy from attending Home Rule meetings, the fact did not restrain Dr. Dorrian from presiding at one in Dublin, with which he had no especial connection. He seemed thus to delight in defying the Cardinal in his own diocese.

Against the Lord Chancellor as a Catholic he had an especial grievance. There had been a new and large cemetery recently purchased for Belfast by the Town Council. A third of the ground was reserved for the Catholics. Dr. Dorrian declined to accept it for his co-religionists unless power were given him to refuse the right of burial to any one who while living had become obnoxious to his Church. To this demand the Town Council refused to consent. All they could do, they said, was to give a third of the ground for Catholics to be buried in: but it was not their business to have anything to do with the rules the bishop laid down. They could not as a Town Council recognise any difference between good and bad Catholics. There was an appeal to the Privy Council in Dublin. Dr. Dorrian made a particular request to the Chancellor to attend. He was not present. At this absence the bishop was very angry and indignant. He never forgave it.

He said, "All I asked was that Lord O'Hagan should be there, and explain to Protestant Privy Councillors in what a position a Catholic bishop was placed by not having full authority over a Catholic place of burial. You know what the Town Council of Belfast is. It is Tory, it is Orange."

On being spoken to on this subject by the gentleman to whom Dr. Dorrian complained of his neglect to attend the Privy Council when this question was before it, the Chancellor said, "It is all well enough for Dr. Dorrian to blame me for my absence. Perhaps I might not have done his cause much good had I been present." On another occasion Dr. Dorrian said to the same informant whom he occasionally met at a Catholic house, "You ought to sympathize with the Home Rule movement; sooner or later it will be granted. Ireland will then be able to govern herself. We shall have colonies too."

"Colonies!"

"Yes, colonies."

"Where will you get them, my lord?"

"Oh, we shall get them, never fear. England will have to give them us."

This was said with the utmost gravity, with an apparent consciousness of infallible authority. On the listener it produced the effect of blank amazement. He could scarcely believe his ears. In a local Catholic newspaper started under Dr. Dorrian's personal influence, and at the time edited by one of his curates, it was afterward stated that Ireland had a claim to the Atlantic seaboard where the New

England colonies had been established. Ireland could not indeed be said to have founded those colonies, but it was asserted that an Irish ship before the days of Queen Elizabeth had first visited the coast, and then without landing any one had returned to Ireland. Hence Ireland had a prior claim to England to what were afterwards regarded as English possessions. The history and this reasoning were truly Irish. They were in the very spirit of the bishop's words, "We shall have colonies too."

Dr. Dorrian professed much humility. He did not, he said, like to be called "my lord." After the disestablishment, the members of the Irish Protestant Episcopal Church were not at all disposed to abate their pretensions to having spiritual lords. Though their bishops had ceased to sit in the House of Lords, each of them was and is generally addressed as "My Lord Bishop."

Dr. Dorrian as a bishop, with all his professed humility, asserted his authority very highly. He could not bear opposition to his will on the part of any of his clergy or among his people. The Nationalist editor Mr. M'Kenna, whose confidence I first received respecting the system of spelling England backwards on the part of himself and his colleagues of the Nationalist Press, had had the misfortune to offend the bishop. Notwithstanding that he offered to go down on his knees and beg the prelate's pardon, he was never readmitted to favour. With Dr. Dorrian's encouragement a new Catholic and Nationalist newspaper was started against Mr.

M'Kenna's. The two did much harm to each other, neither of them could be said to have done much good.

A Catholic medical man, one of the sons of a gentleman who when he died was said to be the oldest merchant in Belfast, did not give up being a Freemason. He was opposed afterwards in his profession by his bishop, and all his family, a very respectable one, were from that time regarded in no friendly spirit by the episcopal eye. Thus was Dr. Dorrian, as a Catholic and a Nationalist bishop in the North of Ireland, and especially in Belfast, where such strong sectarian prejudices prevailed. It could not justly be said that he was a peace-maker. Between him and the Protestant bishop Dr. Knox, who never said an unkind word, and never did an unkind thing, there was a striking contrast, not, it must be candidly said, to Dr. Dorrian's advantage. But it is fair to state that there was as decided a contrast between the Catholic Bishop of Down and Connor and the Catholic Bishop of Limerick. A greater contrast than that between Dr. Dorrian and the Irish Catholic Lord Chancellor could also scarcely be found. Yet they were both devoted to their Church.

The Chancellor just at this time went down to Belfast to distribute the prizes at a Working Men's Exhibition. It was the first time he had visited his native town since his elevation to the highest judicial position in Ireland. There were people who thought that sectarian prejudices would be raised against him, and that he might receive some slight from the work-

ing men, the large majority being Protestants. There was no attempt made to treat the visitor with disrespect. He was most cordially welcomed.

Immediately afterwards, on the 14th of June, 1870, he was raised to the peerage as Baron O'Hagan of Tullahogue, in the county of Tyrone. What Lord O'Hagan's especial connection with Tullahogue, which is itself very obscure, was, it might be difficult to discover. The question at the time of his elevation was asked in the Ulster newspapers. It does not appear to have received an answer. But the people generally, Protestant as well as Catholic, by whom Lord O'Hagan was known, admitted that the honour was well merited.

By some of the new Home Rulers now being organised under Mr. Butt, the distinction was not greeted with much favour. Lord O'Hagan was a high official of the Government, and looked upon as not at all favourable to the Nationalist cause. He was, too, a Liberal, and Mr. Butt himself was a different kind of politician. The alliance between certain Irish Conservatives and the Home Rulers under Mr. Butt continued. These Conservatives still professed to resent the disestablishment of the Irish State Church. They did what they could to encourage a movement which they had afterwards good grounds for regretting.

But Judge Keogh's judgment in the Galway election petition soon afterwards caused much exultation among the Conservatives. To say the truth, that judgment, though applauded by one party at the time, was very unjudicial. The judge delivered

from the bench a political invective: it was not a calm and deliberate declaration of the law.

One of the bishops most offended with this pronouncement from the bench was Dr. Dorrian. He said it was shameful, monstrous. He insinuated that the judge was not only intemperate in his language, but in all his conduct during its delivery. "He actually," said the bishop, "pulled off his wig in his excitement, and threw it down."

The gentleman to whom the bishop was thus speaking said that he had not seen this fact, if it were a fact, reported in the newspapers.

"That, however," said Dr. Dorrian, "does not prevent it from being true. I have it from the best authority, from one who was in the court. Then what could be more untrue than to quote Edmund Burke as an admirer of Cromwell? You must know that this is contrary to the truth."

"Quite contrary to the truth. Burke, though in his Letter to a Member of the National Assembly he did justice to Cromwell's great qualities as a ruler, was certainly not one of his admirers. He called him a great bad man."

"So he was, so he was," said the bishop; "but he was not worse than Keogh is. The judge is also a renegade. But he is already being punished for what he has done. He cannot sleep at nights."

Dr. Dorrian afterwards said that he had not much confidence in Mr. Gladstone. He could not, in the bishop's opinion, be depended upon. "I see," he

said, "he is not prepared to carry out his principles of disestablishment in Wales."

This was true. Before the session of 1871 ended, the question of the disestablishment of the State Church in Wales was brought forward in the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone as Prime Minister defended that Church as inseparable from the Church of England. He spoke eloquently, and even passionately, in its favour. He seemed again the devoted Churchman whose character was drawn by Macaulay in the celebrated essay. After such a speech it was thought that the Church in Wales was safe. It had at least one excellent, intrepid, and powerful defender in the Prime Minister who had carried the Irish Church Act. He, indeed, then did not please other people besides the Ulster Catholic bishop, Dr. Dorrian. The Irish Conservatives, who were more or less in league with Mr. Butt and the Home Rulers, said, "No thanks to you." Since their Church had been disestablished, they asked why they should trouble themselves about the Church in another part of the kingdom. After such a display of enthusiasm in defence of the Welsh Church, little did they dream that Mr. Gladstone would undertake to introduce a Suspensory Bill for what he has since called gallant little Wales. Little did they dream that he would undertake to do for Wales, and also for Scotland, what he had done in Ireland.

CHAPTER XIII

1870—1871

A Pause in Irish Legislation—Working of the Land Act—War between France and Germany—Effect on Ireland—An Irish Ambulance—Marquis of Hartington as Irish Chief Secretary—"A Great Day for Ireland"—State of Westmeath—Mr. Gladstone on his Irish Policy—State of the Country—Murder of Constable Talbot—Mr. Butt in Glasgow—"No Irish Docks"—The Opposition of the Ulster Protestants to Home Rule—Land Purchase under the Bright Clauses—Litigation respecting the Hertford Estates—The Compromise between Sir George Hamilton Seymour and Sir Richard Wallace—A Libel Action—Tenants in the Witness Box—Lord Chief Justice Whiteside—Serjeant Armstrong—Isolated Position of the Ulster Tenants—Progress of Events.

WITH the passing of the Irish Church Act of 1869 and the Irish Land Act of the following year, Mr. Gladstone's first Government had carried out the principal part of its legislative programme. There was a pause. The Peace Preservation Act had indeed to accompany the Irish Land Act; but it was not very strenuously opposed. For a time even Mr. Gladstone's energy had spent its force. He seemed disposed to rest and contemplate the work he had done as a British statesman bringing forward Irish

remedial measures. He said that the House of Commons had spent more time on the Irish Land Act than it had done on any other Bill; but that, if it should be necessary, the Government and their supporters would be quite ready to devote still more. The Act was regarded as an experiment. In the autumn the Lord Chancellor and other judicial officials were, it was said, engaged in framing rules for carrying the Act into practice. There was some discontent among the more prominent tenant-right advocates in Ulster because the measure did not concede fixity of tenure, but sought in an indirect manner, by providing a graduated scale of compensation for disturbance, to render evictions costly and difficult. The Irish landlords began to form an association to protect their interests, which they thought to be very seriously jeopardised.

The country was, however, during the autumn and winter, unusually quiet. There was very little agitation on any Irish question. Irish politics, for the time being, had suddenly lost most of their interest.

The great war then being waged between France and Germany had no inconsiderable influence in bringing about this result. The absorbing interest in that struggle, with its sudden change of fortune from the time when the poor Prince Louis Napoleon was stated by his Imperial father to have received his baptism of fire, had an almost paralysing effect on those who watched the progress of the military events. The Irish Nationalist Press strongly favoured

France. It was said, with some truth, that had the French arms been successful Ireland would have been a very difficult country to live in. When MacMahon took the command to go to the relief of Metz, the Home Rule editors made him a kind of Irish Nationalist hero. When he was fighting the series of disastrous combats, they saw nothing but victories of the French, where all impartial observers saw only defeats. They as usual persisted in shutting their eyes to the plainest facts, until the great surrender at Sedan could not be explained away. The contradiction between what did occur and what they represented as occurring before the capitulation of the Emperor and his army was ludicrous. One of them, the most enthusiastic panegyrist of MacMahon, was told to read over his recent articles and live.

In the Caserne d'Esfeld at Sedan the English and American Ambulance Corps was stationed. It had on its working staff several Irishmen, at whose head was an eminent surgeon of Belfast, Mr. William MacCormac, now Sir William in London, who acquired a great reputation, under the Red Cross, in this and other wars. At Sedan he was visited by the writer very soon after the great battle and the still greater surrender. The eagerness of the members of the staff for news from one who was their first visitor since they had been virtually shut up was remarkable. The sight of the wounded and dying men, of the newly-made graves with the crosses upon them, and sometimes with the swords of those

who were buried beneath, of the dead horses still unburied on the roads, of the trees which had been shattered by cannon, of the Sisters of Mercy going from tent to tent in which the sufferers lay, of the village of Bazeilles, which had been literally destroyed, formed an appalling picture which could never fade from the mind of one who had witnessed the scene. Even the accounts given of the war with its melodramatic changes, which Mr. Disraeli, as it broke out, had said were not to be expected for a time, seemed to have a quieting influence on Ireland, and especially on those who had been most actively engaged in the great controversies directly associated with the Irish problem.

Some of the Home Rulers, indeed, took an active part in getting up an Irish ambulance for succouring the French wounded. It was formed on Nationalist principles, but it was scarcely a success. The members who composed it, on their departure for the seat of war, were very unfavourably criticised in the newspapers. It was said that they had the appearance of Falstaff's ragged regiment, and that with them very few people would be disposed to march through Coventry—that was, to Paris.

However this may have been, there was a decided lull, a silence that might be felt, in Irish politics. Another change was in the personality of the Irish ministers. Lord Hartington, now Duke of Devonshire, succeeded Mr. Chichester Fortescue as Irish Chief Secretary. He had been the mover of the resolution on reform which eleven years before had put an end to Lord

Derby's second administration. He had associations with Ireland as the heir to the fine estate round Lismore Castle which had for several centuries, indeed from the time of the first of the Stuart kings, we might almost say even from the days of Queen Elizabeth, been in possession of his family. That estate was generally spoken of as indulgently and liberally managed. A Duke of Devonshire had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1737 to 1745. His administration, as the present duke was not long ago reminded, had been very successful. Lord Hartington, when he became Irish Chief Secretary, was of course regarded as an Englishman, and represented an English borough constituency. He was once asked at an English country house how he attended to his duties as Irish Chief Secretary. His reply, as was reported in the newspapers at the time, was "I do not attend to them at all." But it would be a great mistake to believe that the marquis thus trifled with his official responsibilities. Lord Hartington might be disposed to encourage the impression that he did nothing. In reality he did a great deal. In all the official situations he has filled he has been most painstaking and attentive to their duties. This all his colleagues who have had experience of him in various departments will acknowledge. Lord Hartington, as Irish Chief Secretary, had less trouble than his predecessors, Lord Mayo and Mr. Fortescue, or than his successors, Mr. W. E. Forster, Sir George Trevelyan, Mr. Campbell-Bannerman, and Mr. Balfour. The cares of the office seemed, indeed, to sit

very lightly on Mr. James Lowther, who was almost impervious to criticism. But the other eminent men just mentioned had reason for regarding the Irish Chief Secretaryship as the most difficult and the most thankless in the administration. Lord Hartington's sound judgment always stood him in good stead. He made no mistakes.

Lord Hartington as Irish Chief Secretary had comparatively an easy time. He did give some offence to the Catholic bishops by a speech to his constituents in the Radnor district in favour of non-sectarian education; but they were not disposed seriously to quarrel with him on this nor on any other question. Though he has in recent years paid three important political visits to Ireland, during his official connection with this country he made no public appearance in the northern province. He spent indeed a few days with Lord Dufferin at Clandeboye; but the visit was a strictly private one. Between the marquis and Lord Spencer, with whom he had now to co-operate, a strong personal friendship existed. On all Irish matters it was understood that they saw eye to eye.

Mr. Chichester Fortescue left the Irish Secretaryship, and Lord Hartington accepted the office at the beginning of the year 1871. It is customary in Ireland to talk of her great days. The 1st of January, 1871, was a great day for Ireland. From that day religious ascendency may be said to have ceased. It was on that day disestablishment, as provided by the Irish Church Act, came into effect. The delay

had given the clergy and people of the disestablished Church time to prepare for the great event which they for the most part had so strongly deprecated. By a coincidence the 1st of January in that year was on a Sunday. Most of the clergy thus affected by the Act delivered sermons such as they thought to be suitable to the occasion. Most of these addresses were moderate and conciliatory. But there were, of course, questionable things said. One rev. gentleman from a pulpit in Belfast stated to his congregation: "This is the first day of disestablishment and disendowment, and ours is the first National Church that ever a Protestant State, faithless alike to justice, to treaties, and to God, has sent out naked and divorced into the world." It would be difficult to parallel in one sentence the series of assumptions thus advanced as unquestionable truths. This clergyman went on to say: "Yes, it is while our enemies are forced to yield us the noble title of the Church of Ireland that they have yet doomed us to be disestablished—that is, stripped of all the respect that States are bound to pay to truth, and disendowed, which is the Parliamentary phrase for plundered. We go forth not knowing whither we go, but knowing that the road is narrow and crags are on this side and chasms on that, and the night is dark and storms are already muttering overhead."

The Irish Land Act of the last session was at the same time as the Irish Church Act coming into operation. These two great measures were acting simultaneously. Some of the first cases, in which consider-

able sums as compensation for disturbance were given, excited much interest among the tenant farmers of Ulster. The Queen's Speech, which was one of the longest on record, said very little about Ireland. There had virtually been three Irish sessions: the one of the Suspensory Bill, another of the Irish Church Act, and the third of the Irish Land Act. But Ireland was now to have rest. This was expressly stated in the Queen's Speech. There was to be no more heroic Irish legislation: at least for the present. The state of Westmeath had, however, become alarming during the winter, and into it a Secret Committee of Inquiry was proposed. This was, however, modified. A Select Committee was appointed, and on the inquiries then entered into the Westmeath Act was founded, conferring additional powers on the Lord Lieutenant and the magistrates. The Peace Preservation Act of the last session was followed by this local Act for a particular county. Both were of course warmly defended by Mr. Gladstone: both were Coercion Acts.

On the strength of the Westmeath Act, and on other alarming indications, the Conservatives in the House of Commons declared that the Irish remedial legislation of the last two years had failed. This conclusion was, however, somewhat premature. The two principal measures in which that remedial policy was embodied had only begun to work. The measure of this session most interesting to Ireland, and more even to Ulster than to other parts of Ireland, was Mr. Forster's Ballot Bill. This, notwithstanding the

refusal of the House of Lords to consider it at the time, was destined to become law in the following session. It was more important to Ireland than to Great Britain, and might be classed with the Church Act and the Land Act. In the autumn, on addressing his constituents of Greenwich, Mr. Gladstone referred to his Irish policy of three sessions. He was disposed to survey what he regarded as a completed work, and to pronounce it all good. He used some remarkable words, both with respect to the present and the future. He said that the community of Ireland was well satisfied with the measures that had obtained the sanction of the Legislature, and that there had been laid for a no very distant future the foundations of solid political content. It was in a sentence immediately following that Mr. Gladstone made his first reference to the civilised world as the tribunal for judging his Irish policy. "In the face of the three countries," continued the Prime Minister, "and in the face of civilised mankind, legislation has made a great effort to do justice, and all that is taking place leads me to the confident expectation that the effort will be crowned with success."

Yet soon afterwards events occurred which showed that on the seditious elements of Irish society the passing of Mr. Gladstone's great measures had had no conciliatory influence. Their voice was still for war against England and everything English. An undoubted Fenian, Kelly, was tried in Dublin for the murder of an active head-constable, Talbot. The head-constable was dogged at midnight and deliber-

ately shot. The trial lasted several days. Mr. Butt resumed his recent part of defender of the Fenians, as he had taken the release of the Fenian convicts as a part of his Home Rule programme. His popularity among the lawless and rebellious classes was revived.

Dublin, however, was in an alarming state. As the prisoner was daily conveyed to and from the Court House, he was escorted by large bodies of police, infantry, and carabineers. It was evident that an attempt at rescue, such as had taken place at Manchester, when Sergeant Brett was shot dead in the police van, was apprehended in Dublin. The populace behaved in a most disgraceful manner. They hooted, hissed, and groaned at the military and police escort, and evidently wished to have it understood that the deliberate assassination of zealous policemen as informers was meritorious, that the killing of them was no murder. Some of the Irish Nationalist newspapers published this doctrine in so many words. The *Irishman* plainly put the question to its readers, whether it were a moral crime to get rid of an informer. The *Flag of Ireland* went even further. It said: "The death of Talbot, no matter how or by whom it was brought about, is regretted by none, and very many do not hesitate to express the opinion that the slayer (whoever he may be) of the dead man ought not to suffer a day's imprisonment."

These were significant comments on Mr. Gladstone's public statement that he was confident the great efforts Parliament had made to do justice would be successful. Kelly the prisoner, whom the Father of

Home Rule had earnestly defended, was acquitted. It was scarcely expected that he would be convicted. Soon afterwards Mr. Butt went to Glasgow, and delivered a Home Rule speech, in which very little indeed was said in favour of Mr. Gladstone and his majority's recent efforts to do justice to Ireland. He assumed that Grattan's Parliament, in which the Protestants only were represented, had been very successful. He overlooked the fact that from almost the earliest time, after the so-called Grattan's Parliament acquired what was considered legislative independence, it began to be seen that such powers could not be long safely exercised with due regard to the harmony and co-operation of the two legislative assemblies, one sitting at Westminster the other in Dublin.

Poyning's law was repealed, and practically legislative independence conceded in 1782. Only two years afterwards the Duke of Rutland, as Lord Lieutenant, wrote to Pitt, who had recently become Prime Minister, "Were I to indulge a distant speculation, I should say that without *an Union* Ireland will not be connected with Great Britain twenty years longer."[1] Mr. Butt also overlooked the other fact that the rebellion of '98 had broken out when the country was ruled by that Parliament, and that the Act of Union had, as an alternative policy, been literally forced on the Government and the Legislature. He assumed, too, that Glasgow owed

[1] *Correspondence between Mr. Pitt and the Duke of Rutland*, p. 19.

its prosperity to Scottish independence. As a fact, and, as Sir Walter Scott has very plainly intimated through his Baillie Nichol Jarvie, Glasgow owed her rapid prosperity to the Union of Scotland with England, and to the manner in which that city thus had the colonial and West Indian trade opened to the enterprise of her merchants. Mr. Butt regretted that Galway and Limerick had not docks and lines of quays like Glasgow. But on his return he landed at one of the quays of Belfast, where there were a number of docks and lines of quays, showing a rapid industrial progress, not in spite of but in consequence of the Union.

To have such fallacies repeated by the Father of Home Rule, who had for so many years of his life been a Conservative and even a Tory, was sad. Ireland he declared to be in a most desperate state. The chairman of the meeting said he was in favour, if possible, of obtaining Home Rule by legitimate means; but that if those failed he would have recourse to the illegitimate. Nothing could be franker nor plainer. It was evident that the remedial policy was not checking the Home Rule movement; that its effect might be considered just the contrary.

But in the North of Ireland, among the Protestants, the agitation met with very little sympathy. When it first began, and the discontented Conservatives were to be conciliated, the cry was, "We can do nothing without the Protestants." But the Protestants of any recognised position in Ulster favourable to Home Rule could almost be counted on the ten

fingers. Few as they were they soon began to show a tendency to diminish rather than to increase.

About the same time the tenants began to take some interest in land purchase, by what were called, and are still called, the Bright Clauses of the Land Act. It was curious, however, to find the tenants on Lord Derby's Irish estate showing a disinclination to purchase their farms with the aid of the public money, and asking their noble landlord not to give up the proprietorship. The tenants of the Marquis of Waterford, who had long enjoyed a tenant right not unlike that of Ulster, acted very differently. They bought their farms, even at what would now be thought extravagantly high prices. They paid for them twenty years, twenty-two years, and even in some instances twenty-eight years' purchase.

The litigation between Sir George Hamilton Seymour and Sir Richard Wallace for the possession of the Irish estates of the late Marquis of Hertford was proceeding. The Irish Court of Common Pleas gave a judgment in favour of Sir George. This was in confirmation of a verdict delivered with great reluctance by the jury, according to the direction of the Judge of Assize in Belfast. Notice of appeal was, however, immediately given, and in the Ulster newspapers advertisements appeared cautioning the tenants not to pay any rent to the defendant, who had obtained the judgment in his favour. The tenants, a very large body, in and around Lisburn, were in a state of great perplexity. The agent of the estate, who up to this time had acted in a neutral

capacity between the litigants, thought that the judgment of the Court of Common Pleas was irrevocable. He at once acted as Sir Hamilton Seymour's representative, and thus placed himself in a position towards Sir Richard Wallace he had afterwards much reason to regret. The Ulster tenant farmers generally watched the progress of this great case with much interest. It was for the time the general topic of conversation. Some of those on the estate were perhaps not disinclined to profit by the opportunity for not paying their rents. They were, however, very earnestly advised by a newspaper in their confidence that they might be quite sure they would have, sooner or later, to pay the money to the last farthing, and that they had better hoard it until they knew who their landlord should finally by law be declared to be. The glorious uncertainty was exemplified in the progress of this litigation. Before seven judges in the Irish Court of Exchequer Chamber the case was again considered, and a majority reversed the unanimous judgment of the Court of Common Pleas. It was known that an appeal would be made to the House of Lords. Some time afterwards, however, a compromise was come to between Sir Richard and the defendant. Sir George Hamilton Seymour agreed to take four hundred thousand pounds, and allow the larger Hertford estate in Ireland to remain with Sir Richard Wallace. The question turned on the interpretation of a codicil in Sir Richard Wallace's favour. Some lawyers, maintain to this day that the judgment of the Court of Common Pleas was right,

and that it would have been upheld. Sir George Hamilton Seymour was, however, not rich; he thought it better to be on the safe side.

While the litigation was proceeding, and for some time afterwards, the management of the Hertford estates had been the subject of unfavourable comment in several of the Ulster newspapers, and especially in the *Northern Whig*. The late agent, who had been superseded by Mr. Capron, the head of the London firm of Sir Richard Wallace's solicitors, thought that a paragraph and a leading article in that journal reflected upon himself. He brought an action for libel. The trial excited the greatest interest in the North of Ireland; for a plea of justification was entered, which implied that certain allegations of tyrannical conduct were true. The case came before Chief Justice Whiteside and a special jury in Dublin. The trial continued for several days, and through the Christmas holidays. Without in any way wishing to reflect on Chief Justice Whiteside's memory, it may perhaps be permitted to be said that, bred as he was in an extreme Conservative school, and with some very strong Protestant and territorial prejudices, on the bench in political cases he was at least as much an advocate as a judge. Some of the witnesses, however, confident in their statements out of court, lost their self-possession under examination in the box. The judge retorted on them with merciless severity, and he was, of course, upheld in this conduct by the leading counsel for the plaintiff, the late Serjeant Armstrong.

The serjeant contended that an agent had a right to use a certain amount of influence for political objects over tenants on a large estate. He was professedly a Liberal, and had sought to obtain the representation of the ancient borough of Carrickfergus as a Liberal. But he now said in court, "Away with sentimentalism on this question between landlords and tenants."

One tenant who stated that he had been induced to sign a document of which he did not approve, was met by the Chief Justice with the statement, "Well, sir, well, you are of sane mind. You have not been in a lunatic asylum, have you?"

This for a time checked the overbearing style of Serjeant Armstrong. He appeared utterly confounded. Nor was this strange. The Bar and a large number of people in court knew that the learned serjeant had himself once been placed under certain restraint.

But this was not the last of Chief Justice Whiteside's not very judicial utterances. The question about the sane mind led to another one from the bench. The timid farmer, who had never been in the box before, said that he was perplexed when he signed the paper, with beside it a threatening notice to quit. "Surely, sir," said the judge, "you knew what you were doing?"

"Oh, yes, my lord," said Mr. Palles, the present Chief Baron, who was one of the counsel for the defendant, "he knew perfectly well what he was doing under a threat of a notice to quit." Loud

cheers from the large body of tenant farmers in court greeted this announcement. "Clear the court," shouted the Chief Justice.

The judge's charge to the jury was strongly in favour of the plaintiff. He plainly stated that had it not been that the question was in some degree connected with electioneering matters in Lisburn, he would have been disposed to state that the management of a large estate was a private business and not a subject for public criticism in newspapers. Read in the light of what has taken place in Ireland during the last twenty-five years, this judicial statement of the Irish Chief Justice seems singularly narrow. Since that time the management of a large number of estates has been subjected to public investigation in the Land Courts. Questions of what is, and what is not, a fair rent have been decided independently of the landlords, and in every newspaper, as well as in the House of Commons itself, the conduct of those landlords generally has been discussed quite as a matter of course.

The jury after a considerable delay told the judge that there was no prospect of coming to an agreement. He left them to themselves and went to dinner. On his return he was informed that there was still a disagreement. In answer to a juror he gave a direction to which immediate objection was taken by Mr. Butt, who acted as principal counsel for the defendant. The judge did all he could to obtain a verdict. It would, he said, be much to be regretted if the costs of a new trial should have

to be incurred. At last the jury gave way. They returned a verdict; but only for fifty pounds on each of the two counts. This could scarcely be considered a triumph to the gentleman who brought the action. That he was guilty of intentional tyranny was not believed nor even intimated. He is now dead. There is here no attempt, no desire to revive any of the charges which were testified to in the witness-box. It must be confessed, however, that to administer a large Irish estate for an absentee landlord like the Marquis of Hertford, under a system through which the tenants had no legal protection, was trying to the character of any human being. According to the Greek proverb, "To live alone a man must be either an angel or a devil." An Irish agent for a large estate, in the absence, the almost life-long absence, of the landlord, saw no person for miles round superior to himself, or capable of exercising over him any restraining power. He was surrounded by men on whom he could confer important favours or almost ruin. Where agriculture was almost the sole industry as in much the greater part of Ireland, the competition for land was great. The tenant at will, without any legal claim to compensation for the improvements he had himself made, or for capricious disturbance, was in a very unenviable position.

Those tenant farmers in Ulster led hard lives. They were separated from their British brethren by miles of sea. Boasting of what their forefathers

had done in the cause of civil and religious liberty, they could scarcely themselves be considered free. They were even made the instruments of their own servitude, the forgers of their own fetters. They were as much separated from the Catholic tenants generally by religious and racial differences as they were from the Protestant tenants of Scotland and the North of England by the sea. But they did their work fearlessly and manfully. It was not good for them nor for the State that they should be in the position they had long been. It was not good that some of the facts which were deposed to by witnesses in this trial for libel should have been as they were.

After the verdict, notice of a motion for a new trial was immediately given. This was soon afterwards brought forward and ably argued; but the judges showed no disposition to re-open the case in consequence of the Chief Justice's last direction to the jury, though without that direction, as Mr. Butt and Mr. Palles contended, the verdict might not have been delivered. The old state of things was, however, disappearing. Events were moving on.

CHAPTER XIV

1872—1873.

Notices to Quit—The Ballot Act—Lord Spencer's Visit to Belfast — Regarded as an Uncompromising Unionist — First Election under the Ballot in Ulster—Serjeant Dowse's Appointment as Irish Solicitor General—Hesitation of the Government—Contest for the Representation of the City of Derry—Mr. Palles—Mr. Biggar—Mr. A. M. Sullivan's Attack on Mr. Palles—Dialogue between Mr. Biggar and a Friend—Denominational Education—Declaration of the Poll —Mr. Biggar's Personal Appearance—His Political Career —The Unexpected Happened.

It had long been the custom to shower notices to quit, like snowflakes, on the tenant farmers. There was very seldom an intention to act upon these legal notifications. They answered their purpose by reminding the occupiers that they were at the landlords' mercy, and thus kept them in a conscious state of dependence. These merely formal documents which emanated from the rent offices of so many estates, even when not at all regarded as nor intended to be serious, naturally produced much heartburning. With, of course, legal penalties for disturbance on a graduated scale, according to the

new Land Act, these unpleasant missives almost ceased. They were no longer served without some reasonable cause. This in itself was a great improvement, as much in the interest of the landlord as of the tenant. The administration of the Act was being closely watched. Some of its defects began to be seen. Though in Ulster tenant right was now legally secured, it was found, however, that it could be rendered comparatively valueless by systematic raising of rents. The lower the rent, the more valuable the tenant right; the higher the rent, the lower the value of the tenant right. This was thoroughly well understood by both sides. With reference to the practice which was now being adopted, Lord O'Hagan publicly reminded those who took an interest in the operation of the great Land Act, as it was thought to be, of Mr. Gladstone's statement that though Parliament had spent more time over the Bill than over any other in his experience, the Government were willing to spend even more if necessary to carry out the intentions of the law. The Irish Lord Chancellor therefore said that the time might come when the measure would require revision. There was nothing really objectionable in this remark; but it was strongly reflected on in the Irish Conservative press. For making the admission he did, Lord O'Hagan for a time appeared to have raised around him a storm of obloquy.

But the Ballot Act had been passed. It had indeed, as a compromise, been limited in its operation

to a short term of years. It too, like the Land Act, was admittedly an experiment; but in Ulster at least it was soon acknowledged to be a successful experiment.

Lord Spencer, as Lord Lieutenant, visited the North of Ireland just as the session of 1872 closed. Though representing Mr. Gladstone's Government, his Excellency was very well received. He opened in Belfast a dock, which was called the Spencer Dock. He was entertained at a public banquet by the Agricultural Society, and delivered a comprehensive and able speech on the state of the country, which he showed by a series of statistics to be very satisfactory. His reference to the Ballot Act as a valuable measure for Ireland provoked some, though slight, hissing. The Lord Lieutenant could, however, also congratulate his hearers on the repeal of the Party Processions Act as a proof of the impartiality of the Government. His last words were understood to be directed against the Home Rule movement, which, according to Mr. Butt, was daily becoming more formidable. "Let us," said Lord Spencer, "try to remedy just grievances and apply practical cures for those grievances; we shall then really add to the strength and stability of the United Kingdom."

The Lord Lieutenant resumed his seat amid loud cheers. Whatever Lord Spencer might or might not be, he was always regarded as an uncompromising Unionist. For his Unionism the Ulster Conservatives could even tolerate his praise of the Ballot Act, and

the measure also, as he informed his audience, applicable to Ireland for the multiplication of polling places.

It was now to be shown how the Ballot Act could practically work in Ulster. This was first tried at an isolated municipal election in Belfast. The quiet and good order of the proceedings delighted every one anxious for peace. A little while later the Ballot was to be thoroughly put to the test at a party Parliamentary contest in the venerable and historical city of Londonderry. It may in passing be observed that by the inhabitants generally, and indeed by all the Ulster people, however much attached to the British connection, that city still continues to be called by its ancient name of Derry.

Not long after his election to the Maiden City Serjeant Dowse was appointed Irish Solicitor General. The appointment was not, however, made without some hesitation. Lord O'Hagan and the then Attorney-General, Mr. Barry, had been told that there might be a difficulty in Mr. Dowse retaining the seat on accepting the Solicitor-Generalship, with the inevitable new election when a member of Parliament in such a position had accepted a place of profit under the Crown. They consulted a gentleman who was on one of his usual Saturday to Monday visits to the Irish Lord Chancellor. It was a delicate question, under the circumstances, to advise the Government upon; because a loss of the seat which had been so gallantly won would be regarded as a rebuke to the ministers with respect to their Irish policy. The Chancellor and

the Attorney General were, however, advised that Mr. Dowse's return again might be regarded as almost a certainty. The gentleman thus consulted subsequently justified his own opinion by a letter from the Rev. Dr. Smyth, who was Moderator of the Irish General Assembly then sitting in Belfast to consider the sustentation question, and another letter from the Rev. William M'Clure, the highly-respected Presbyterian minister in Derry, and, as has been said, the brother of the Liberal member for Belfast. Those letters were forwarded to Lord O'Hagan by his friend, and two days afterwards the serjeant received the Irish Solicitor-Generalship.

Serjeant Dowse was again returned for the time-honoured city. In the House of Commons he continued to be regarded as a character. His jokes and manners still afforded much amusement. He was a humourist of a somewhat strange kind. He was always rough and ready. But his career in the House of Commons did not last long; the careers of Irish Attorney and Irish Solicitor-Generals in the House of Commons seldom do last long. Where there are so many judgeships vacancies on the bench occur very frequently, and the two principal law officers have of course the first claims to such promotion, and seldom hesitate to make the best of the opportunity.

This autumn a judgeship in the Irish Court of Exchequer became vacant by the death of Baron Hughes. Mr. Dowse, being at the time Attorney General, it was reported that he would receive this

judicial appointment. His coveted seat for Londonderry was of course the object of several aspirants to parliamentary honours, who flitted across the scene only to disappear. But Mr. Charles E. Lewis, the London solicitor, who, on the strength of his Presbyterianism, had been for some time on the outlook for an Irish constituency in which Presbyterians were very numerous, now thought that he saw his opportunity, and determined to use it to the utmost. It was announced that he would be a Conservative candidate with the support of Lord Claud John Hamilton, whom Mr. Dowse had defeated. But Mr. Lewis was a stranger. A large number of Derry Conservatives wished to have a local representative in the kindly and popular Alderman M'Corkell.

There were thus soon two Conservative candidates before the constituency. Mr. Joseph G. Biggar announced himself somewhat unexpectedly as a Home Rule candidate. He thus anticipated the Irish Attorney General. Mr. Palles was regarded as the most distinguished Irish Catholic lawyer then at the Bar. His appointment to the Irish Attorney-Generalship had been strongly pressed on Mr. Gladstone by the highest Catholic authorities in Ireland. A better appointment from their point of view could not have been made. But Mr. Biggar, without the slightest prospect of being himself returned, persevered in his candidature as a Home Ruler. The motive, as one of his principal supporters avowed, was to embarrass the Government by defeating their Irish Attorney General. This was the treatment

Mr. Gladstone received from the Home Rulers after he had passed the Irish Church Act, the Irish Land Act, and the Ballot Act. This was their reply to his message of peace.

When Mr. Palles arrived at Derry he found the Home Rulers, with Mr. Biggar at their head, only too ready to practise what they were accustomed to condemn in the Conservatives. They did all they could to break up Mr. Palles's meetings and to prevent him being heard. At one of these proposed gatherings the supporters of the Attorney General found the hall had been taken possession of by Mr. Biggar and his friends. To take possession of a place for which they had not paid, but for which the supporters of Mr. Palles had, seemed to some of those Home Rulers a very good joke. Mr. Biggar's powers as an orator were small. The conclusion of one of his speeches was remarkable. "This," he said, "is the issue: 'Biggar for Ireland, all else for England.'"

Two days before the polling day of Saturday, November the 23rd, Mr. A. M. Sullivan, Nationalist editor, appeared on the scene. In the interests of Mr. Biggar, this gentleman made a most violent attack on Mr. Palles. He accused him of having given up the cause of denominational education, to which, as the favourite candidate of the large majority of the Irish Catholic bishops, he was supposed to be devoted. In the most solemn manner, he declared that he could, if he would, say dreadful things against the Irish Attorney General, things which would

compel him to leave the city by the night train. In the *Derry Journal*, a Home Rule and Catholic newspaper, as well as in other newspapers, Mr. Sullivan was reported as saying that Mr. Palles "would go down in history as a Judas who betrayed his country and his God." He made the vaguest but strongest charge against the Irish Attorney General's honour as a man, and undertook to make it good the next evening, the evening before the polling. This, however, he did not do. The promised letters were not produced. But these scandalous accusations were kept by Mr. Sullivan hanging over Mr. Palles's head during the following day; and it was not until nearly a week afterwards, when their withdrawal could not affect the result of the contest which had been decided, that they were partly disclaimed. Mr. Sullivan then stated he believed that he did not use the last words as reported, "and his God." Mr. Palles, it seems, might be a traitor to his country, but not to his God.

Strange, too, it was, that Mr. Palles was assailed almost as violently by a Home Rule and Nationalist organ in Belfast especially supported by the Catholic bishop, Dr. Dorrian. It has already been stated that, notwithstanding Cardinal Cullen's attitude to the Home Rule movement, Dr. Dorrian had not hesitated to preside over what was really a Nationalist meeting in Dublin. It was, however, surprising to find the newspaper under his control supporting Mr. Biggar, and assailing Mr. Palles almost as violently as Mr. A. M. Sullivan had done. This was quite a new

experience. It was all the more extraordinary because the Catholic Bishop of Derry, the friend of Cardinal Cullen, was, with all his clergy, a supporter of Mr. Palles. Lord O'Hagan informed the writer that, in the heat of the contest, the Cardinal wrote to Dr. Dorrian expressing the hope that he had nothing to do with the Catholic newspaper assailing Mr. Palles, and declaring that such attacks were a disgrace to Catholicism. Dr. Dorrian disclaimed all responsibility for the journal. Lord O'Hagan was afterwards told that the reputed editor of that newspaper was one of Dr. Dorrian's own curates, the late Rev. Michael Cahill. The Chancellor replied: "How, then, can Dorrian disclaim all responsibility for the publication? As a Catholic bishop he can shut up his curate at any time." When that newspaper changed hands it appeared in evidence that the bishop had advanced £2,000 for its support, and was thus according to appearances at the time of this Derry election its virtual proprietor.

There was no end to Nationalist artifice and misrepresentation to defeat Mr. Gladstone's Irish Catholic Attorney General. The day of the polling, which was looked forward to so impatiently, arrived. The city of Derry was placarded with Nationalist appeals to the electors. Mr. Biggar was represented as the hero of the time, as the great Irish patriot, "Vote for Biggar and all Ireland," "Vote for Biggar and Home Rule," "Vote for Biggar and Isaac Butt." These were specimens of only a few of the placards which were issued in Mr. Biggar's favour. During the course of

the day, letters, too, were placarded expressly from Mr. Butt, as the Home Rule leader, showing that he took the greatest interest in the contest, and was most anxious for Mr. Biggar's success. It turned out afterwards that these letters were mere fabrications. Mr. Butt wrote in the following week to the newspapers stating that no such letters had ever been written by him in support of the Home Rule candidate. But, like Mr. A. M. Sullivan's charges, they did their work for the time. While the Irish Attorney General was accused of betraying the cause of denominationalism, as a fact he lost about a hundred Presbyterian votes on account of being thought too denominational.

At noon, while the polling was going on, and while Mr. Biggar's placards were everywhere to be seen, he met in the street a gentleman from Belfast. The following dialogue passed :—

"Ah ! You have come up to assist the Irish Attorney General," said Mr. Biggar.

"Well, and what then ?"

"You might have saved yourself the trouble ; he is sure to be defeated."

"But where will you be when the return is made ? You have just polled eighty votes."

"Only eighty !" Mr. Biggar looked a little disconcerted. "How do you know ?"

"On the best authority, at the tally rooms. Now, Mr. Biggar, as you have sent messages to me, perhaps you will excuse me for saying that it does seem an extraordinary thing that you should per-

severe in a contest with no hope of being returned yourself."

"Oh, if M'Corkell had not retired I might have won."

"You never had the least chance. But you may succeed in returning Mr. Lewis, the London attorney, who has never been before in Derry. Is this what you call Home Rule?"

"The best way to carry Home Rule is to defeat Mr. Gladstone's officials."

"After he has done so much for Ireland?"

"He has done nothing for Ireland. Whatever he has done has been for himself. I am opposed to all Governments."

"Like the Irishman in New York?"

"What did he do?"

"When asked how he would vote, he said, 'Of course, agin' the Government.'"

Mr. Biggar laughed and said, "Oh yes! that's me."

Some more conversation of a personal nature passed, and the Home Rule candidate, as his habit was, then walked, or rather seemed to limp, very rapidly away.

Further down the street an eminent Liberal Presbyterian, who had been mayor of the city and had been knighted, was met. He was asked by the gentleman whom Mr. Biggar had just left how he was going to vote. "I am not going to vote at all," was the reply.

"But you have always been a Liberal."

"Certainly, and always will be. But I am in favour of non-sectarian education. The Attorney General is too strong a denominationalist for me. No! I can't vote for him." Thus, while Mr. Palles was accused by Mr. A. M. Sullivan of sacrificing his denominational principles for place, he was, by Presbyterian Liberals, considered a fanatical denominationalist.

About eleven o'clock that Saturday night the result of the polling was declared. Mr. Lewis was returned by a majority over Mr. Palles. Mr. Biggar had polled only some eighty and odd votes. Cannon were fired, and the bells of the old cathedral rang out a joyous peal, announcing the result far and wide over the time-honoured walls, and down the shore where the huge stone of the boom which had played so memorable a part in the great siege was then still quietly lying.

In describing the procession at the opening of the States-General of France, Mr. Carlyle writes, "But now if Mirabeau is the greatest, who of these six hundred may be the meanest?"[1] At that time the meanest appeared to be the slight ineffectual-looking man, the advocate of Arras, F. M. J. I. Robespierre. At the time of this Londonderry election, if Mr. Butt was regarded as the ablest Home Ruler, as he was called the Father of it, those who knew Mr. Biggar best, his fellow-townsmen in Belfast, regarded him as the meanest. He was admittedly of a very poor

[1] Carlyle's *French Revolution*, Vol. I, Book iv., Chap. iv.

figure, hump-backed, and almost a dwarf. His voice had the broad North of Ireland accent. Years afterwards, when a member of the House of Commons, the manner in which he addressed the Speaker as "Mr. Speaker, sur," afforded much amusement. He first brought himself into notice by ostentatiously sending a subscription of ten pounds to a Home Rule fund in Dublin. He not only subscribed the letter with his name, but added to it the official title of Chairman of the Belfast Water Commissioners. This gave great offence, and Mr. Biggar was not afterwards elected to the office. He was, however, still a Town Councillor for one of the wards in Belfast, but when returned his National sympathies were unknown. On his first appearance at a Home Rule meeting in Dublin, his insignificant appearance caused much disappointment, which was plainly shown by the cry, "Ah, *that's* Biggar!" A small man, he generally wore a large and very tall hat, which on his last election as a municipal representative was crushed over his ears, and under it his face utterly disappeared. His deformity, of which he was quite conscious, appeared to inspire him with the spirit of Scott's Black Dwarf, for something of misanthropy, of cynicism, and even of malignity, urged him to defy the opinion of the great majority of the people among whom he lived. He always appeared among them, but not of them. Some of his actions, like indeed his persistency in continuing his candidature in Derry, seemed inspired by a pure love of mischief. He was a kind of political Puck. In his business relations, however, he was

always most honourable. Though in the action against him for breach of promise afterwards he described himself as a pork butcher, he was a merchant admittedly strict and upright in his dealings. But his pretensions to be a member of Parliament, without any political knowledge, without any natural or acquired accomplishments, without, as he was plainly told, any social position or oratorical ability, seemed to be utterly ridiculous. They were laughed at.

But the day came when he showed that he was not to be despised. On being subsequently elected for Cavan, he proved that he understood how to force on Home Rule better than Mr. Butt and the great majority of his followers. He and "young Parnell" afterwards formed a party of their own, adopted obstruction as a system, bade defiance to public opinion both in and outside of the House of Commons, and became independent of Mr. Butt and his professed moderation. Very soon after the strange alliance between Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar was established, Mr. Parnell publicly said, "Had I a few more such members as Mr. Biggar, I would soon show the leaders of both parties what could be done in our cause." He succeeded in his wish. Even before he died Mr. Butt had virtually ceased to be the leader of the Home Rule party, and, with Mr. Biggar's steady support, Charles Stewart Parnell had taken the place of the Father of Home Rule. The lean kine had eaten up the fat kine. The despised Mr. Biggar himself became a political power, and in a strange way the

promoter, and in the House of Commons the originator, of a revolution in Parliamentary tactics, which at last compelled Mr. Gladstone and the much larger part of a proud political party to somewhat ignominiously surrender. The unexpected did happen.

CHAPTER XV

1873—1874

The Irish University Question—Sir William Vernon Harcourt—Public Opinion in Ulster—The Irish University Bill—Defeat of the Government and its Results—Preparations for the General Election—Lord Cairns Pays an Ominous Visit to Belfast—Mr. Monsell—Dissolution of the Parliament—Mr. Gladstone's Equivocal Language—The Beginning of a Series of Ulster Liberal Victories—James Sharman Crawford in Down—The Great Change in Ulster.

As Mr. Gladstone's first administration began the session of 1873 they found themselves confronted with another labour of Hercules. The Irish university question had almost kept pace with the land question, and was now expected to be dealt with by the ministers. Dr. MacHale, the Archbishop of Tuam, had made some menacing declarations on this subject. Though the former session was avowedly not an Irish one, Mr. Fawcett's Bill for what was called the opening of Trinity College had kept higher education in Ireland before the public. The ministers in opposing that measure as inadequate could not avoid the responsibility of soon bringing in some Irish University Bill of their own. Mr. Gladstone had used language which implied that he was confi-

dent of being able to settle the question. But it was not until his friend and colleague Mr. Cardwell spoke at Oxford, that something like a positive pledge was given that an Irish University Bill would form an important part of the ministerial programme for the following session.

Some of the best friends of the Government, and especially their Ulster friends, received Mr. Cardwell's announcement with dismay. It was pointed out to the Irish Lord Chancellor, it was afterwards publicly stated in one Liberal Ulster newspaper, that it would be far more difficult for the Government to deal with the Irish university question than with the Irish Church and with the Irish land. Difficult as those two questions were, on them the Liberal party were harmonious. They agreed on the principles of reform; but on the Irish university question there were among Mr. Gladstone's followers diametrical differences of opinion, differences of opinion which scarcely admitted of any satisfactory compromise.

Mr. Fawcett himself was an earnest supporter of non-sectarian education. So were many leading Liberals, or Liberals aspiring to be leaders. Among them, and perhaps more outspoken than any other, was Mr., now Sir, William Vernon Harcourt. He was not supposed to be animated with very friendly sentiments towards Mr. Gladstone. He represented what were called Low Church and Mr. Gladstone High Church principles, principles which Mr. Harcourt at least showed that he was not indisposed to carry out in politics, even to the embarrassment of his great

leader. He had recently made a public declaration that university education ought not to be placed under the control of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, that Trinity College should not be disendowed, and that the money of the State ought not to be applied to denominational objects. Mr. Lowe, representing the London University, was understood to agree with Mr. Harcourt's utterances on the question. They were applauded by the *Standard*, which was understood to speak Mr. Disraeli's sentiments. Yet he and his colleagues when last in office had proposed to confer a charter on an Irish Catholic university, and to give it a partial public endowment. As Prime Minister, Mr. Disraeli had said that the rejection of this measure was something like re-enacting the penal laws.

He and his party, whatever may have been their policy when in office, might be certain to oppose Mr. Gladstone's Irish University Bill when they were in opposition. The friends of the Queen's University, who were very numerous in the North of Ireland, and many of them in friendly relations with Mr. Fawcett and other influential British Liberals, were devotedly attached to non-sectarian education. Some of the principal professors of the Queen's College in Belfast particularly were in communication with their non-sectarian allies in England. Notwithstanding their regard for Mr. Gladstone, whom they revered, they were not disposed to listen on this subject to any compromise. The Ulster Liberals generally, so many of whom were Presbyterians, held similar

views. With many misgivings the intention of the Government to deal with this question was received.

The measure was announced in the Queen's Speech at the opening of Parliament early in February. It was almost the only first-class measure so announced. The reference to it was, however, very confident. The Government, it was said, intended submitting to the two Houses at an early day a measure for settling the question of Irish university education. A measure for settling the Irish university question! These were very simple words. But they referred to a question which it was not easy to settle, and which is in the opinion of those who hold strong denominational views not yet settled.

The Bill, as introduced, proposed to make the University of Dublin, independently of Trinity College, a reality. A governing body of twenty-eight members was to be proposed by the ministers and approved of by Parliament. Trinity College, the Queen's Colleges of Belfast and Cork, the Roman Catholic University in Dublin, and the Magee College, were all to be incorporated in this Irish National University. The Queen's College of Galway, which had not been thought successful, was to disappear. A portion of the endowment of Trinity College was to be applied to this general university; but the old Trinity was still to have the theological faculty and all that it implied. A reference in the Queen's Speech when speaking of the promised Bill was found to mean that there were to be no chairs

provided for the teaching of philosophy and history, subjects, it was said, excluded from the old mediæval universities, but regarded as of great importance in the modern educational institutions.

The Bill was a compromise, and most assuredly a well-intended compromise. But it might be said of it, in a condensed form, what Burke said of Lord Chatham's unfortunate Cabinet: It was a piece of diversified mosaic, a tessellated pavement without cement, utterly unsafe to touch, and unsure to stand on. The educational institutions it was professed to join, and the persons who were to be united in the governing board, had no wish to be brought together at all.

The measure at first was not regarded with disfavour. It was ingenious; apparently impartial and independent. During the three weeks between the introduction of the Bill and the motion for the second reading all the elements of opposition were enabled to concentrate themselves. The measure was displeasing to the supporters of Trinity College, to the Catholic bishops, who wished for an endowed university of their own, and to the friends of the Queen's University and its colleges, who refused to see that they might perhaps go farther and fare worse.

At the time for the second reading the most incongruous elements were understood to be united against the ill-starred measure. The strongest opposition came perhaps from the Liberals themselves, and especially from the Presbyterians and the professors of the Queen's College in Belfast. The

Government might have carried the Bill in the face of the Conservatives, but the defection of so many Liberals was very serious.

Mr. Disraeli, in opposing the measure on the second reading, scarcely said anything about its provisions. He went into an elaborate defence of concurrent endowment as the best possible policy for Ireland, but had in the course of his speech regretfully to admit that "concurrent endowment was dead." Mr. Gladstone made a brilliant defence of the Bill, but he had to acknowledge that it was opposed from all parts of the House, and from all denominations: Catholics, Protestant Churchmen, and the Ulster Presbyterians, the supporters of non-sectarian education and of denominational education, Conservatives, Liberals, Radicals, and Home Rulers. Its defeat on the motion for the second reading by a majority of three was not a matter of surprise. A powerful Government, which had been supported by a majority of more than a hundred, which had been nearly five years in office, which had passed the greatest Irish measures of the time, which had disestablished the Irish Church and carried a comprehensive Irish Land Act in the face of the most determined opposition, was defeated early in the session of 1873 on another great Irish measure.

Some of those who struck the blow were anxious to atone for it by passing a vote of confidence. This could easily have been done. But Mr. Gladstone placed his resignation in the hands of the Queen. Mr. Disraeli was requested to form a Government

with authority to dissolve the Parliament. But he evidently did not anticipate that he would soon have a large majority at his command. He declined the task, and Mr. Gladstone most reluctantly returned to office. There was, afterwards, a partial reconstruction of the Government; but it had lost its former authority. Notwithstanding all the assurances of support the Prime Minister had received, it was felt that the first Gladstone administration, recently so powerful and popular, had received a mortal wound. Like the hurt of Mercutio, it was not so deep as a well, nor so wide as a church door, but it was enough.

A valuable measure for the establishment of a Supreme Court of Judicature was passed. But after the defeat of the Government there was no heart in their supporters, and Parliament was prorogued as early as the 5th of August. During the recess, it was generally understood that a dissolution would take place after, but not before, the following session. It was not anticipated that the event would occur sooner.

But preparations for a general election were being made in all parts of Ulster and in all parts of the United Kingdom. The Ballot Act was found to work admirably. Ulster seemed stirring with new life. The first evidence of the growing independence among the tenants was afforded by Conservatives. There had been a vacancy in County Tyrone. Following the example of Mr. Johnston, Mr. J. W. Ellison Macartney had appealed to the electors on independent principles. He was defeated; but at

the general election then impending was afterwards returned.

Mr. Johnston himself was, however, showing no longer the independent spirit which he had manifested at the last general election, and during the first three years of the Parliament. He went to Canada, and returned bringing with him a Mohican chief who had become an Orangeman. He had attended very little to his Parliamentary duties during the session, and was in the interim engaged in showing hospitality to the Canadian Orange deputations in return for the hospitality shown to himself in the Dominion. It was noticed that he gave, strangely enough, credit to Mr. Disraeli and not to the Liberal Government for having repealed the Party Processions Act. The fact, however, was that Mr. Johnston had been prosecuted under the Act by Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues, and that it was to the imprisonment he had been subjected he owed his position as a popular Orange candidate, and afterwards his return as a member of Parliament. Mr. Disraeli went out of his way to call Mr. Johnston his honourable and learned friend. In the autumn Lord Cairns even came to Belfast, and the visit was ominous. He presided at a meeting in favour of a Nurses' Home, but it was very well known that he was assisting in nursing the constituency which had returned Mr. Johnston and Mr. M'Clure, in order that the breach in the Conservative and Orange party in Belfast might be filled up before the general election. He met the old Conservative local leaders

at dinner, and it was soon afterwards announced that Mr. Johnston was to be provided with "a suitable colleague."

Strong efforts were made to rouse the old Orange prejudices, which had recently appeared to be subsiding. On the 5th of November, there was a serious riot in Portadown, the Orangemen insisting in forcing their way through the Tunnel into the Catholic part of the town. The law was vigorously enforced; but the Government were denounced for their decided action, not only by the Conservative Press, but at a Sunday amnesty meeting in Hannahstown, a village near Belfast, by Mr. Biggar. A Catholic, he said, could with his friends vote as a Home Ruler with Orangemen against the Government. The language then with respect to the release of the Fenian prisoners was very much what has recently been used with respect to the convicted dynamitards. "Whether Mr. Gladstone," said Mr. Biggar, "be good or bad in himself we do not know; but we know this, that he is the mouthpiece of Chichester Fortescue, Robert Lowe, that snob Hartington, and others of that class. We have a letter, which will be read, from Tom M'Clure, in which he apologises for the Gladstone Government. Now, I want to know if you will support Mr. M'Clure if he offers himself again? Let all people who ask for your suffrages be taught that they must go in for the Irish people and nothing else." Mr. Biggar was the only person who ever thought of calling Lord Hartington, the then Irish Chief Secretary, a snob. The

time came when he also at Cork could call Lord Spencer the Red Earl and a murderer, and expressed his aspirations for an Irish Hartmann, the murdering Russian Nihilist.

All parties, Conservatives, Liberals, and Home Rulers, were instinctively preparing for the coming general election. But at the dinner on Lord Mayor's day in London, Mr. Gladstone spoke confidently, admitting indeed that the Government was old, but assuring his audience that it was not decrepit.

The ministerial changes, though important, scarcely seemed to strengthen the administration. Mr. Bright, who had been in ill-health, returned to office as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. Sir William Vernon Harcourt, whose course had seemed sufficiently eccentric, received his reward for his somewhat equivocal defence of the Irish University Bill by being appointed Solicitor General. Mr. Monsell, Lord O'Hagan's intimate friend, and a most amiable and conciliatory Irish Catholic, retired from the Postmaster-Generalship. It was rumoured in Ulster that Mr. Gladstone had received from him the assurance that all the Irish Catholic bishops would accept the University Bill, that they had afterwards directed the Catholic members to oppose it, that he had misled the Prime Minister, and had therefore sent in his resignation. There may or there may not have been truth in this report. It was credited at the time. I have never asked a question on the subject. But there was no more Liberal and enlightened

Catholic gentleman than the retiring Postmaster-General. He was soon afterwards deservedly raised to the peerage as Lord Emly, and at a very advanced age, and until his death, like most of Lord O'Hagan's friends, continued a Liberal Unionist.

Mr. Disraeli himself wrote a letter accusing the Government of blundering and plundering. This was a characteristic phrase. He soon afterwards went to Glasgow to deliver an inaugural address, which had been long delayed, as Lord Rector of the University. He followed it up by a speech to the Glasgow Conservatives, of course assailing the Government, but saying nothing of his favourite policy of concurrent endowment.

Mr. Butt too, as the Father of Home Rule, with no fear as yet of Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar, paid another visit to Glasgow. He assured his audience that the cause was advancing, but he denied that in any way it had a tendency to separation, or was hostile to the thorough supremacy of the Imperial Parliament. The Home Rule Associations were dissolved and a Home Rule League formed.

This was the attitude of the various parties at the end of the year 1873. There was a suspense; people were expecting something: they scarcely knew what. But in the early spring of 1874 the thunderbolt fell, in what at the time appeared to be a clear sky.

The revenue returns were most satisfactory. The Government, it was evident, would have a large surplus, a fact which is not always the accompaniment of Liberal administrations. At the beginning

of the new year, 1874, the question was being asked, What would be done with the surplus? The great financial success of the Government, and the recent ministerial changes, did not appear to have given any additional strength to the administration. The bye-elections had gone against the Ministers, the last being that of Stroud, which was regarded as a genuine Liberal constituency. The result of that contest was generally believed to have had great influence with Mr. Gladstone, always more or less impulsive and very sensitive, in inducing him suddenly to take an unexpected step. People in Ulster, as in Great Britain, were still confidently assuming that the general election would take place after the impending session, when it was said that the Prime Minister was not well, and confined to his room. His illness was found to be a political one. He had been preparing his manifesto to the constituencies, on announcing the dissolution of Parliament in an address to the electors of Greenwich. It was issued on Saturday, the 24th of January, and on the following Monday was in all the morning papers in the kingdom. The country found itself, without any warning, in the midst of the general election. Once more the unexpected had happened.

Mr. Gladstone's appeal through the electors of Greenwich, his constituents, to all the electors of Great Britain and Ireland had evidently been carefully studied. He dissolved Parliament on a Budget with an anticipated surplus of more than five millions, and proposed to get rid of the income-

tax. Three sentences of the address were thought by Mr. Gladstone's friends in Ulster and elsewhere to have especial reference to the Home Rule question, with a view to subsequent legislation. They were in these words: "Permanent and solid as the union of the three kingdoms is, they present varieties of circumstances, of organisations, and even of law. These varieties, combined with the vast development of Imperial interests, add seriously to the duties of Parliament, and they seem to have reached a point when they appear for the present to defy all effort to overtake them. I think that we ought to admit every improvement in the organisation of local and subordinate authority which, under the unquestioned control of Parliament, would tend to lighten its labours and to expedite the public business."

This language was more or less equivocal. It was the cause of some perplexity to his leading Ulster supporters. Like Mr. Gladstone's subsequent statement about the attempt to blow down the Clerkenwell prison-wall, by the killing and maiming of several poor and innocent people in a crowded London thoroughfare, having brought the disestablishment of the Irish State Church nearer, it might admit of two interpretations. Was the Prime Minister about to make common cause with Mr. Butt as a Home Ruler, or did he point to some very desirable measures of local government? In Ulster the Liberals, and especially the tenant farmers, even when virtually they had no independent representation at all, were strongly in favour of a complete reform of the grand

jury system and of having the principle of taxation with representation fully established. They were also, as were indeed many Conservatives, in favour of having private Bills considered by some local tribunals, in order that the enormous expense of the carrying of such measures through the Parliament at Westminster might be saved. But Mr. Gladstone's language, innocent as it appeared to be, had a more general application.

"I don't like it at all," said one of his most ardent supporters. "Is the Prime Minister a Home Ruler in disguise?"

"Do not be afraid," said the friend to whom those words were spoken. "You overlook the first words of the sentence. 'Permanent and solid as the union of the three kingdoms is——'"

"I hope it will continue to be permanent and solid. I shall quote those words in the speech I am going to deliver in support of Mr. M'Clure to-morrow evening."

In Mr. Gladstone's address, nominally to the electors of Greenwich three days afterwards, he threw no new light on this enigma. He dealt more with the past than with the future. He boasted of what he had done in the way of Irish reforms, especially with respect to the Irish Church and the Irish land questions. He was now, however, both Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister, and said that with a surplus of five millions it was the duty of Parliament to get rid of the income-tax, as altogether exceptional and only to be imposed when some very large public expenditure was to be incurred.

He was himself returned for Greenwich with a Liberal colleague by a large majority. But it soon began to be seen that the tide was running strongly against the Liberal candidates in England. The result is well known. The Liberal majority, which after many losses during five years still stood at eighty, utterly disappeared and was replaced by a Conservative majority of sixty.

The defeat of the ministry in England and Scotland was decisive. Here it is not at all necessary to enter into the details. Mr. Gladstone fatally miscalculated the effect of his sudden dissolution of the Parliament, in which on most questions he could still count upon a large working majority. He took his own followers by surprise. Since the defeat of the party of Fox and North at the dissolution in 1784, it was thought that there had never been such a Liberal reverse. But Pitt dissolved the Parliament at that time and appealed to the country against the Coalition. Mr. Gladstone himself struck the blow which was so fatal to many of his supporters.

Defeated in Great Britain, he had, however, some consolation in Ireland, and especially in Ulster. The Irish Land Act and the Ballot Act were doing their work. They were making the tenant farmers independent. True it was Mr. Johnston and his Orange supporters in Belfast had united with the old Conservative party that had found "a suitable candidate" in Mr. J. P. Corry, a moderate Conservative Presbyterian, who had voted for the Liberal, Mr. M'Clure, at the last election, and against Mr. John-

ston himself. Some of the Catholic electors acted on Mr. Biggar's advice and did not support Mr. M'Clure. The advocates of the Permissive Bill were also against the Liberal candidate. The Conservatives regained the seat they had lost, and Mr. Johnston was reported to have said that the return of Mr. M'Clure with himself at the former contest was a disgrace. The Conservative majority, Conservatives and Orangemen being again united, was some two to one. Mr. C. E. Lewis, though by a small majority, retained the seat he had recently won in the city of Londonderry. But Lord Newry, who had on Mr. Kirk's death promised to be neutral, and was therefore accepted as member for Newry by both parties, was now defeated by Mr. Whitworth. This was the beginning of a series of Ulster Liberal victories, which caused surprise and dismay at the Conservative headquarters. Mr. Thomas A. Dickson as a Liberal defeated Colonel Knox in the borough of Dungannon, and Mr. Daniel Taylor, a Liberal, defeated Sir Hervey Bruce in the borough of Coleraine. Mr. Dalway, who had been expelled from the Orange Society for having been returned as virtually a supporter of Mr. Gladstone at the former contest, was again triumphantly elected.

But the most significant successes were in the Ulster counties. Lord Arthur Edwin Hill-Trevor and Colonel Forde had as Conservatives represented the county of Down for a quarter of a century. After the great defeat of the old tenant right champion, William Sharman Crawford, it seemed hopeless

to challenge the powerful territorial ascendency. This, however, was now done by Mr. James Sharman Crawford, his second son, who managed the Crawford estate for his brother, Major Crawford. The name of Sharman Crawford, who could not find an Irish constituency, and for a time represented an English borough, was still a household word in the Ulster counties, and especially in Down. Farmers and other people christened their children by the name of Sharman. After a lapse of so many years, after so many changes, after the tenant farmers by successive Land Acts have gained far more than William Sharman Crawford ventured to ask for them, they still mention his name with respect and gratitude. Mr. James Sharman Crawford was now returned by a majority of a hundred and thirty-one votes over Colonel Forde. Mr. Charles Wilson contested the county of Antrim, where at the last contest Sir Shafto Adair was defeated by a majority of more than two to one. The Liberal candidate, a stranger from Australia, though of an Antrim family, polled in this contest twice the number of votes recorded for the popular and resident Sir Shafto Adair. He was only defeated by a hundred and thirty-two, and these it was said were principally composed of spoiled ballot papers. But the greatest Ulster Liberal victory was in the county of Londonderry. There Mr. Hugh Law, who had succeeded Mr. Palles as Irish Attorney General on that eminent lawyer's appointment as Chief Baron of the Exchequer, and

Professor Richard Smyth of the Magee College, and recently Moderator of the General Assembly, were returned by majorities of nearly two to one over the Conservative candidates.

These Liberal successes in Ulster, and in the Protestant parts of Ulster, while the Conservatives were winning so many constituencies in Great Britain, astonished Mr. Disraeli himself. In the hour of his unexpected triumph in England, he felt somewhat sorely these Ulster reverses. He made a speech in which he bewailed the defeat of his most valuable supporters in Ireland. He stated that they had been replaced by extreme and violent men, who would almost hesitate at nothing. This was unjust. The new members returned by the Ulster Liberals were moderate and conscientious men, as little disposed to promote a policy of revolution as Colonel Knox, Sir Hervey Bruce, or Colonel Forde. They were not Home Rulers; they were as resolutely opposed to Home Rule as any Ulster Conservative representatives.

The return of Mr. J. W. Ellison Macartney at his second contest for Tyrone could not indeed be claimed as a Liberal victory. It was, however, considered a Conservative defeat. Mr. Macartney appealed to independent Orangemen. Like Mr. Johnston in 1868, Mr. Macartney obtained many Liberal votes. Mr. Fay and Mr. Biggar were also returned for Cavan. They were both Home Rulers, and therefore not Liberals. Mr. Biggar, as has been shown, disclaimed being a supporter of Mr. Glad-

stone's Government, or of any Government. But the return of two such declared Home Rulers over Colonel Saunderson, who had represented the county during the last six years, and was then a Liberal and a supporter of Mr. Gladstone, was undoubtedly significant.

The Ulster counties, like the boroughs, were falling away from the Conservative party. The old boast that "we are twenty-nine" had become ridiculous. Three seats had been lost at the last general election. Notwithstanding the great gain of Londonderry and Belfast to the Conservatives, they had now lost eight Ulster seats, and this too at a time when the Liberal party were suffering nearly everywhere else such disastrous reverses.

Mr. Gladstone was very sensible of what under such circumstances he owed to the Ulster Liberals. One of his last acts before leaving office was to create Mr. M'Clure a baronet. When that gentleman stood for Belfast this second time it was very well known that he was going on a forlorn hope. Mr. Johnston had come to an understanding with his old Conservative opponents, and had joined with the "suitable colleague" to defeat those to whom he owed much on independent grounds at the former general election. Mr. M'Clure could scarcely hope to be again successful against a well-known Conservative and Orange majority of two to one. He had too been offered one of the two seats for the county of Londonderry, which was regarded as safe, and for which, indeed, Mr. Law and Professor Smyth were re-

turned. His friends, however, felt that he could not well leave Belfast without giving the electors who had supported him an opportunity of again recording for him their votes. He went through the form of the contest with a conclusion which was regarded as foregone. In informing Mr. M'Clure that he had advised the Queen to confer a baronetcy upon him, Mr. Gladstone expressed the hope that "the distinction would be taken as an acknowledgment to a very large portion of the North of Ireland."

These words are in Mr. Gladstone's letter to Mr. M'Clure. A great change had come over Ulster. Those who had been so long dumb began to speak. The tenant farmers, with the protection of the Land Act and the Ballot Act, began to show unwonted signs of independence. A wave of Liberalism swept over the province. Here and there it met with strong obstruction; but it continued to flow on. The men who in Mr. Gladstone's support made so gallant a stand in both boroughs and counties were proud to be regarded as his followers. They were grateful for what he had done in their cause. But, as has been stated, they were not Home Rulers; they were not Irish Nationalists; in their ranks the word Home Rule was never mentioned. They were, with perhaps some Catholic exceptions, who, however, remained silent on the question, as devoted to the Union and to the British connection as any of their opponents, the Ulster Conservatives. They were Liberals then, and they are Liberals now. They were and are Liberals of the same style as Mr. Gladstone was

himself when a little while before he spoke at Aberdeen, and declared Home Rule to be the merest folly. That speech was widely read and commented upon in Ulster. To it the Ulster Liberals frequently referred with pride and confidence. Some of them said among themselves, "Thank Heaven we have a leader who knows what true Liberalism is, and will never desert us." Mr. Gladstone was also well satisfied with his Ulster Liberal followers. In a letter to me on the 13th of March, just after the general election, he wrote: "The North of Ireland, if it has lost some good men, has certainly given most striking and most cheering indications."

CHAPTER XVI

1874—1875

Mr. Gladstone's Resignation—A Memorable Day—Mr. Butt—Time not bringing nearer a Settlement of the Home Rule Question—Mr. Gladstone's Retirement from the Leadership of the Liberal Party—His Reply to an Ulster Correspondent—The Publication of the First Pamphlet on the Vatican Decrees—Lord Denbigh, Mr. Gladstone, and the Irish Catholic Bishops — Ulster Liberals Shocked by Mr. Gladstone's Pamphlet—Sir W. Harcourt as Mr. Gladstone's Opponent—Mr. Gladstone's Sedan.

BEFORE the last contests in the constituencies were over, Mr. Gladstone had resigned. As has already been said, he did what he had blamed Mr. Disraeli for doing in the December of 1868. He did not wait to go through a formal debate ending with an inevitable vote of want of confidence, but at once gave his principal opponent the opportunity of forming an administration.

The Conservatives had a working majority. At first they seemed scarcely to believe in their own success. The majority having been unexpected when Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues entered office, they had to consider what measures they would introduce. It was not until the 19th of March that Parliament

met for the transaction of business. Some five measures were mentioned in the Queen's Speech; but none of these could be regarded as of first-rate importance. Only one concerned Ireland: the extension to that country of the Judicature Act of last session. However, Mr. Disraeli declared that "this was not to be an idle session." It was thought likely to be a very dull one.

On the first evening Mr. Gladstone took the opportunity of giving his reasons for his sudden resignation. He admitted that at the dissolution he had still a majority of sixty-five; but such a majority, when a Government at bye-elections were losing seats, he maintained on constitutional grounds to be not sufficient to carry on satisfactorily the administration of the country. Mr. Disraeli in following Mr. Gladstone, with characteristic sarcasm, fully, he said, accepted this constitutional view of the recent situation.

The next day was memorable. Mr. Butt, as the Home Rule leader, moved an amendment to the Address regretting that Ireland had not the full benefit of the constitution, and assuring Her Majesty that Parliament would take the earliest opportunity for considering the dissatisfaction which existed. In replying to Mr. Butt, Mr. Gladstone put some very pertinent questions, questions which can scarcely yet be considered satisfactorily answered. How, asked Mr. Gladstone, could the House be guaranteed against the danger that Irish members, after legislating for themselves on exclusively Irish affairs, would come over here and meddle with the

affairs of England and Scotland? How were Irish affairs to be distinguished from English or Imperial affairs? Mr. Butt had referred to the fifteen Fenian convicts in English prisons. Was this an Irish or English business? Mr. Gladstone's speech gave great satisfaction to his Ulster supporters, and, indeed, to the Unionists generally. It was considered thoroughly uncompromising. He condemned Mr. Butt's resolution on account of its vagueness. In this debate Mr. Biggar made his first speech, asserting, what was quite true, that all Ulster was not opposed to Home Rule. There are two Ulsters, the Celtic and the British: the Celtic on the mountains and on the north-western shore, as in Donegal, for the most part poor and Nationalist; the Ulster of the plains, prosperous, industrious, and loyal, with Belfast as the centre, surrounded by the neighbouring counties, the Ulster of the settlements, which it is not at all certain an Irish Parliament with a preponderating Nationalist majority would respect. One of their leaders has on this question used very significant language.

While Ulster itself had shown a decidedly Liberal tendency at the general election, which had given Mr. Disraeli and the Conservative party also a decidedly Conservative majority in the House of Commons, the result from a Home Rule point of view had also been most important. It had shown that the movement was steadily gaining in strength. Mr. Butt's amendment was supported by fifty votes. Some of his supporters had not yet taken the oath. He calculated

himself that fifty-four Home Rulers had been returned from Ireland, and twenty-four from England. The twenty-four from England might be considered pro blematical. But the fifty-four from Ireland were a fact. This was a larger number of Irish members than O'Connell ever had at his command. But Charles Stewart Parnell, at this time High Sheriff of Wicklow, was not yet a member. His future henchman, Mr. Biggar, sat almost alone, looked down upon rather contemptuously by those who were considered and who considered themselves as the more respectable Home Rulers.

There were during the spring, under Mr. Butt's auspices, two important conferences, with special reference to this Home Rule question. There had also been one on the land, in which the object had been to have in the same assembly the representatives of the Ulster Tenant Right Associations, which were organising themselves, and the Home Rulers under Mr. Butt, who also showed great interest in the territorial question which the Ulster Protestant tenant farmers, as they had indeed shown at the general election, considered far more vital to themselves than Home Rule.

The discussion on Mr. Butt's amendment in the debate on the Address in reply to the Queen's Speech had brought out very clearly some facts. Mr. Gladstone had complained of the vagueness of that amendment and of Mr. Butt's speech. But the difficulties, the apparently insuperable difficulties, connected with giving Home Rule to Ireland, seemed as

plain to most people who considered them twenty-one years ago as they do now. They were stated then as plainly as they are now. After such a lapse of time, after such sudden and startling conversions, after a great party in the State, with its greatest leader, had suddenly gone over to the Irish Nationalist camp, with drums beating and colours flying, after two Irish Home Rule Bills, with an interval of seven years between them, had been brought forward and debated in Parliament, and after three dissolutions and three changes of ministry on this question, we are no nearer a settlement in 1895 than we were in 1874. Time, which settles so many difficulties, is not settling this one of Irish Home Rule. Any one who reads over the debates in the earlier time, and compares what has very lately been said and written upon the question, can scarcely fail to recognise that we are with respect to it not even where we were, that the Home Rule movement has gone backward and not forward.

Very soon after the debate on the Address concluded, Mr. Gladstone produced a sensation. He suddenly retired from the leadership of the Liberal party. They who were aware of Mr. Gladstone's opinions formerly understood to be in accordance with those of his old leader, Sir Robert Peel, about the advisability of statesmen not accepting the arduous task of being at the head of a Government after sixty years of age, and who remembered the hope Mr. Gladstone had himself stated when his chief, Lord Palmerston, was an octogenarian Prime Minister, that at such an

advanced age his mind would be occupied with higher things, thought that he had decided on carrying out this resolution. It seemed, however, strange thus to resign the leadership of the party when, through the unexpected dissolution, it had just met with one of the greatest defeats it had ever sustained. The Ulster Liberals, who had shown that they were grateful to Mr. Gladstone for the Irish Church Act, the Irish Land Act, and the Ballot Act, heard of his abandonment of the leadership of the party with great regret. Mr. Gladstone was afterwards informed by a friendly correspondent how much sorrow this retirement had caused among his Ulster friends, and how much from a political, party, and personal point of view the event was to be deprecated. In reply the veteran statesman and now the retired Leader of the Liberal party appeared to admit that there was some justice in the observations in the remonstrating letter. He said there was no one whose opinions he valued more than those of his correspondent.

The step, though represented as temporary, had been taken, and could not, for the session at least, be retraced. The leadership of the Liberal opposition was for a time in commission.

The session which was not, according to Mr. Disraeli's announcement, to be an idle one, began very quietly. Scarcely a ripple appeared on the waters which had recently been so turbulent. But before the time for the prorogation arrived in August, the House of Commons found itself most unexpectedly involved in a series of acrimonious

religious debates. The Scotch Patronage Bill, the Endowed Schools Bill, and the Bill for the Regulation of Public Worship in the Church of England caused much controversy. The Scotch Patronage Bill seemed to raise the question of disestablishment of the Scottish Church, to which, however, Mr. Gladstone declared himself decidedly opposed. He and Sir William Vernon Harcourt took different sides on the Public Worship Regulation Bill; on all Church questions they seemed to entertain the most directly opposite views. In his attitude to the leader of his party and late Prime Minister, Sir W. V. Harcourt, then and long afterwards, appeared to be influenced by something more than ordinary political antagonism.

Those differences, ecclesiastical and personal, excited little attention in Ulster. The disestablished clergy acknowledged that they were not concerned in any of the three measures which had given interest to a dull and brief session, which with some modifications became law, and which furnished two paragraphs of considerable length to the Queen's Speech proroguing the Parliament in August.

The great sensation of the long Parliamentary recess was the publication of Mr. Gladstone's first pamphlet on the Vatican decrees. It had been preceded by a very trenchant opinion in the *Contemporary Review* from Mr. Gladstone's pen, in respect to a controversy between the then Mr. James Fitzjames Stephen, and Cardinal Manning, on "Ultramontanism and Cæsarism."

The full title of the new pamphlet was significant. It was *The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance: a Political Expostulation.* Mr. Gladstone plainly stated that for the last thirty years the Catholic Church had been tainted in its views of civil allegiance. He regretted that it had after emancipation changed its front and language like an actor who had to perform several characters in one play, and that it should have extended its hold upon the higher classes in England. He especially referred to the words of Lord Denbigh, that he was a Catholic first and an Englishman afterwards. Such a convert, he said, implied that in the event of a conflict between the Queen and the Pope, this nobleman intended to follow the Pope and to leave the Queen to shift for herself: but he declared confidently that the people could not by any incantation be charmed into the Roman camp. Mr. Gladstone made no secret that the defeat of his Irish University Bill through the influence of the Irish Catholic bishops had inspired this pamphlet against the Vatican decrees as incompatible with civil allegiance, and as opposed to his policy, which had been to give peace to Ireland. He wrote: "The Irish Church Act, the Land Act, and the University Bill were all framed with this intent, the latter Bill having been rejected by the Roman Catholic bishops of Ireland." A sentence which immediately followed was very remarkable. Mr. Gladstone declared that "the debt due to that country, Ireland, had been fully paid, and that henceforth it must be treated precisely

like Great Britain." Precisely like Great Britain; not at all as entitled to a separate Legislature and Government, in which those very bishops who defeated the University Bill, and who were bound to obey decrees incompatible, in Mr. Gladstone's opinion, with civil allegiance, would necessarily, inevitably, have a preponderating influence. Very much indeed the contrary. In conclusion, Mr. Gladstone showed himself heart and soul devoted to the union between Great Britain and Ireland. He wrote: "Strong the state of the United Kingdom has been in natural strength; and its moral panoply is now, we may hope, pretty complete. It is not then for the dignity of the Crown and people of the United Kingdom to be diverted from a path which they have deliberately chosen, and which it does not rest with all the myrmidons of the Apostolic Chamber either openly to obstruct or secretly to undermine."

This pamphlet surprised and even shocked some of the Ulster Liberals, who had all their lives been opposed to what was in the province called "No Popery." They had at all times manfully striven to do justice to their Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen. The more devoted they were to the British connection, the more determined they were to do all they could to give to all Irishmen the full privileges of the British Constitution. As has been said, the policy of religious equality as carried out by the Irish Church Act had had no more enthusiastic supporters.

Now they found the author of that measure in

this pamphlet, and in another which followed it, really raising the cry of No Popery. This was what these outbursts meant, if they meant anything. Yet the Vatican had not recently changed its policy. The Vatican decrees to which Mr. Gladstone took exception were published the day before the declaration of war between France and Germany, in the summer of 1870. They could scarcely be called new. They must have been thoroughly well known to Mr. Gladstone, when he at the head of the Government was continuing to carry out his Irish remedial policy, of which the Irish University Bill in the session of 1873 was a part.

Other Ulster Liberals were more indulgent to Mr. Gladstone. Though they had some qualms of conscience in the matter, they did not like to publicly express dissent from one whom they regarded with admiration. One of the ablest of them said: "Well, we must make the best of the pamphlet. I wish, however, it had never been published. It will deprive us of all Catholic support in Ulster, and we cannot beat the Tories without the Catholics."

When the statement from the *Contemporary Review* appeared, the Irish Catholic journals denounced it in strong language. But the indignation then expressed in their columns and by their Home Rule speakers was nothing to what they now displayed. They were furious. The pamphlet was called Orange, as offensive as any speech made from an Orange platform on the 12th of July. Mr. Gladstone, it was said, had forfeited all claim to the

support of the Irish Catholics. His recent Irish University Bill was a device to give to them a stone for bread, a serpent instead of a fish. Mr. Gladstone had now thrown off the mask. He never was, they said, a Liberal. His recent measures for Ireland had been all directed to the object of obtaining on false pretences Irish Catholic votes.

This explosion of wrath, not altogether without excuse, while it dismayed the Ulster Liberals delighted the Conservatives. Their leader in the House of Commons, in opposing the Irish Church Bill, had delivered a somewhat violent speech, in which he had declared that the Jesuits were undermining the throne. He had been sarcastically told that to defend the Irish Church Establishment, as he had proved, required a stronger stimulant than fanaticism. In his recently published novel of *Lothair*, he had dwelt much on Ultramontane intrigues. Now, as if by a miracle, Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone seemed fully to agree respecting the designs of the Church of Rome. But the Conservatives even in Ireland began to speak with more reserve of the Catholics, with whom, it seemed, they might have common cause against Mr. Gladstone. Archbishop Manning's grave remonstrance with his old friend was sympathetically quoted in columns which had never contained a respectful word of Cardinal Cullen. Lord Acton, Lord Denbigh, and one or two other Catholic noblemen, defended themselves from the imputations of being bad citizens while endeavouring to be good Catholics.

With what preceded, and what followed many years later, it is not pleasant to dwell on those Vatican pamphlets of Mr. Gladstone. The second of them, published in the following year, was not more favourable to the Catholic bishops than the first. It is always dangerous to push either religious or political doctrines too far, and to assume that people according to their theories ought to be rebels when they are not. Many are often disposed to stop far short of the extreme application of their principles. The controversy which had been raised early in November by Mr. Gladstone on the Vatican decrees continued all through the year, and indeed until the beginning of the session of the following year. Sir William Harcourt, who in the last session had seemed so bitterly opposed to Mr. Gladstone on the Regulation of Public Worship Bill, was still more opposed to him after the publication of this first Vatican pamphlet. It had been noticed that Sir William spoke as a leader and not as a lawyer, who had, a little time before the late Government resigned, been appointed by Mr. Gladstone English Solicitor General. He showed that his aspirations were political and not legal, that he wished to distinguish himself in the great administrative departments of the State, and not confine himself to the ordinary limits of legal promotion. It was said that in a future Liberal Government Sir William had no desire to be made an English Attorney General, nor even a judge, that he had already caused his determination to be known, at least indirectly, to Mr. Gladstone himself,

and also to Lord Hartington, who was one of the leaders of the Opposition. He expected to become a Cabinet Minister with a very important office, such as the Chancellorship of the Exchequer or the Home Secretaryship. Before Christmas he went down to his then constituency, the city of Oxford, and delivered an elaborate speech. So far from permitting it to be understood that he approved of Mr. Gladstone's pamphlet, he let it be fully known that he was opposed to it, that he regarded it as sectarian and unstatesmanlike, and contrary to the recognised principles of the Liberal party. His speech was indeed directly or indirectly, from first to last, an attack on his late leader and Prime Minister, while he rebuked others for, as he said, "taking liberties with the name of the most eminent member of the Liberal party."

Here is a brief specimen of the liberties Sir William himself took, not with Mr. Gladstone's name, but with the policy apparently recommended in his *Vatican Decrees*. "In politics," he said, "it not seldom happened that above all things the most delusive were logical demonstrations and rhetorical invectives. What was the use of trying to convince men that they ought to be disloyal either to their Church or to their country when they are very ready to be loyal to both? Even at the cost of a syllogism, I think that ingenuity and eloquence could not be worse employed than in persuading men, who were as good citizens as ourselves, that their religion called upon them to be bad subjects. This might be

very good logic and unanswerable casuistry, but it was very bad politics." Sir William sought to reconcile the policy he thus laid down with his objections to the Irish University Bill of the late Government, especially for its proposal to exclude the teaching of history from its educational programme, and with his support in the recent session against Mr. Gladstone of the Bill for the Regulation of Public Worship, which was by Mr. Disraeli termed a measure to put down Ritualism.

Thus at the Christmas of 1874, and at the beginning of 1875, Mr. Gladstone and Sir William Harcourt, though on the same opposition benches, and recently colleagues in a Liberal Government, appeared to occupy antagonistic positions. Was it at all likely that they could ever become friends?

Some of those who had long been most attached to Mr. Gladstone found it difficult to reconcile his pamphlet on the Vatican decrees, not only with his recent policy as Prime Minister, but his earlier opposition to the Ecclesiastical Titles Act, which could never be practically enforced, and which had to be repealed. For that measure, Mr. Gladstone said, "I have never had anything but maledictions." Some of his friends, too, remembered that not long after he had opposed this Bill of Lord Russell's Government, he had, as a member of the Council of King's College, London, protested against the dismissal of that excellent man and eminent divine, the Rev. F. D. Maurice, from his two professors' chairs on a difference of opinion respecting everlasting and

eternal. In the House of Commons he referred to the course he had taken as a member of the Council in King's College. "I never," he said, "like ecclesiastical censures. In another place I had recently to protest against one directed against a clergyman of high eminence and ability, the Rev. Mr. Maurice."

Mr. Gladstone indeed stated in the first pamphlet that he did not meddle with the Vatican decrees from an ecclesiastical point of view. He looked at them in a political light, as affecting civil allegiance. This might be quite true. But the decrees which Mr. Gladstone criticised were the work of ecclesiastics, and it was as ecclesiastics that the members of the Vatican Council were assailed.

Some of Mr. Gladstone's recent Irish Catholic colleagues were very much embarrassed by this unexpected publication. The Home Rule newspapers were declaring that never, never more, could the Catholics depend on the British Liberal party, that the alliance was dissolved henceforth and for ever. The good Lord Emly, recently raised to the peerage, and still more the late Irish Lord Chancellor, Lord O'Hagan, found themselves, through no fault of their own, in a very unenviable position.

At one of Lord O'Hagan's family Sunday dinner parties something was said on this painful subject. A reserve was shown indeed in referring to the pamphlet in the presence of one at least who was not a Catholic "The publication," said Lord

O'Hagan, "is much to be regretted. It will, of course, do harm to the Liberal party in Ireland." Mr. John O'Hagan added, "I never could have believed it possible that Mr. Gladstone would associate his name with such an appeal to Protestant bigotry." "Yes," said another gentleman, "the Pope is the last man to encourage rebellion against the civil power anywhere."

The great change in the political situation during the last twelve months was more fully discussed. The contrast struck all who were accustomed to assemble round the same board. "Who could have thought at the beginning of 1874," said Mr. O'Hagan, "that the Liberal party would very soon afterwards be out of office, and that the Conservatives would be in power with an actual working majority? Mr. Gladstone, like the late Emperor of the French, has had his Sedan." Mr. Gladstone had had his first Sedan, but not his last.

CHAPTER XVII

1875—1876

Mr. Gladstone's Second Vatican Pamphlet—The Home Rule Party Assume an Independent Attitude—A Convention on the Land Question—One of the First Public Appearances of Mr. Parnell—Lord Hartington as the Liberal Leader with the Approval of the Ulster Liberals—Mr. John Martin and Mr. John Mitchel—Mitchel's election for Tipperary—Two Deaths—Civil War—The New Peace Preservation Act—O'Connell's Monument—Lord O'Hagan's Address—The New Irish Nationalist Party.

THE controversy raised by the pamphlet on the Vatican decrees showed some signs of subsiding when, early in the year 1875, Cardinal Newman's publication on the same question gave it renewed interest. The repeated announcements of the intentions of the Irish Catholic members not to follow Mr. Gladstone any more as a political leader complicated from a Liberal point of view the political situation. It had indeed been hoped that Mr. Gladstone's retirement from the leadership of the party, announced in the March of the last year, just after the great defeat at the general election, would be but temporary. But as Parliament

was about again to meet, a correspondence between Mr. Gladstone and his former correspondent, Lord Granville, on the same subject was published. It showed, notwithstanding the remonstrance of his friend, that he intended his resignation as permanent. Mr. Gladstone wrote: "I see no public advantage in my continuing to act as the leader of the Liberal party, and at the age of sixty-five, and after forty-two years of a laborious public life, I think myself entitled to retire on the present opportunity." This was Mr. Gladstone's language on the 14th of January, 1875. He concluded by stating that he was engaged for a short time on a special matter with which he was closely occupied. Soon afterwards it appeared that this special matter was his second pamphlet on the same subject as the former. It was entitled "Vaticanism." The effect of a continuance of the controversy was still more to embarrass the Liberal party, and especially in the North of Ireland.

It was announced, as the day for the meeting of Parliament, the 1st of February, approached, that henceforth the Home Rule party would occupy an independent position between the two great British connections. This was, after Mr. Gladstone's attacks on the Vatican, to be expected. Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone seemed now to vie with each other as politicians in denouncing the Pope and his ecclesiastical advisers. Mr. Butt under such circumstances could not appear to make common cause with either British party. This very attitude, the attitude which Mr. Parnell afterwards with much more sincerity

and determination had to adopt, was forced upon the Father of Home Rule.

Mr. Parnell himself appeared at a convention on the land question. It was composed of Home Rulers from the South and Liberals from Ulster, earnest in the cause of the tenants. An Ulster Liberal was chosen to occupy the chair. This concession to the Northern men was thought to be very graceful. An eminent Ulster advocate of tenant right, Mr. Samuel Black of Randalstown, moved a resolution declaring the Land Act of 1870 to be found inadequate to protect all the tenants from capricious eviction, arbitrary increases of rent, appropriation of their property in their improvements, and in the exercise of what was so dear to the Ulster farmers, the unrestricted right of free sale. In the report of the meeting, this resolution was stated to be seconded by "Mr. Charles S. Parnell, Avondale, County Wicklow." It was one of his first public appearances. He spoke, as he said, both as a tenant and a landlord. As a landlord he regretted that he had not the power of giving the tenants the advantage of tenant right, which only the Legislature could confer. As a tenant he wished that he might enjoy the improvements he made in the land and the capital invested in it as long as he lived. He was complimentary to the Ulster delegates; but he significantly said that while they might assert that their custom of tenant right had existed for two or three hundred years, the customs of the South had an antiquity of several thousands.

This declaration took the Ulster representatives by surprise. They scarcely knew what to make of it. The chairman of the meeting, on returning home, afterwards said to a friend: "Tenant-right customs which have existed in the South of Ireland for several thousand years! What did Parnell mean? Did he intend dating those Southern customs from the deluge?"

This gentleman, in referring to this speech after Mr. Parnell had become the Nationalist leader, said: "I must say that I thought his first address in the convention an extremely poor one. It was delivered with much hesitation and was bald in the extreme. When he sat down it was a relief to the audience." No person who then listened to Mr. Parnell thought that they had before them the future Irish Nationalist leader, that he would soon assume a far higher position than Mr. Butt, and for many years rule the most unruly elements in Ireland with almost despotic authority.

Mr. Butt announced at this time that he and his Home Rule friends would take no part in the election of a Liberal leader in the House of Commons. Mr. Gladstone's letter to Lord Granville stating that his retirement from the leadership was permanent, and not, as was hoped, temporary, had rendered this step before the meeting of Parliament for the session almost inevitable. It was justly said that the Liberal leadership in the Commons could no longer, as it had been in the last session, be carried on by a commission. That commission had been composed

of four eminent men, Mr. Lowe, Sir William Harcourt, Mr. W. E. Forster, and Lord Hartington. Mr. Lowe's pretensions to the leadership were never favourably regarded. Sir William Harcourt's very pronounced hostility to Mr. Gladstone on the religious questions was thought to render him equally unfitted for the post. Mr. Lowe and Sir William united to protest against the selection of Mr. Forster, and, in case of such an event, threatened to form a new cave of Adullam. Mr. Forster had offended the Nonconformists by the twenty-fifth clause of the English Education Act, for which, however, all his former colleagues had a common responsibility. That excellent man himself withdrew his pretensions, and the choice unanimously fell on Lord Hartington. "We have done," said Mr. Bright, "the right thing, at the right time, and in the right manner."

In this opinion the Ulster Liberals thoroughly concurred. Lord Hartington became known to them during the three years he had been Irish Chief Secretary. His firmness, his courage, his plain spokenness, his manly bearing, and sagacious common sense, had recommended him to the Ulster people, and especially to those who had supported Mr. Gladstone, and at the general election had made some successful and enthusiastic efforts in what they regarded as their great leader's cause. Lord Hartington's convictions on the question of the Union were well known. He had very recently said "that neither of the two great parties, the Liberals and the Conservatives, would

ever abandon the cause of the Union and surrender to the Home Rulers, because the party that should do so would, by such a policy, lose more than it could gain." This might seem a somewhat interested way of looking at the question. Its correctness was not, however, at the time disputed by any one. It gave confidence to the Ulster Unionists, who never doubted that the Marquis, and who never doubted that Mr. Gladstone and the old Liberal party, would remain true to their deliberately expressed Unionist principles.

The only reference to Ireland in the Queen's Speech was contained in an intimation that the various statutes of an exceptional nature in force for the preservation of the peace in Ireland would be brought before the two Houses to consider whether some of them might not be repealed. This was supposed to be an acknowledgment that after all Mr. Gladstone's remedial measures had not been such a failure as had been represented. Lord Hartington, on the first night of the session, pointed out the inconsistency of such an announcement with the language the Conservatives generally and habitually used with respect to those measures. The new leader of the Opposition's grave irony, which is one of his characteristic rhetorical weapons, was met by Mr. Disraeli with a statement "that he had not had time to read dull and obscure newspapers in which such language had been employed with respect to Mr. Gladstone's Irish remedial legislation." It was, however, retorted that the strongest condemnation of the

Liberal measures had come from Mr. Disraeli himself. The Irish sentence in the Queen's Speech pointed to a new and modified Peace Preservation Act, which was soon afterwards introduced and passed through its various stages. It was one of the first measures which became law during the session, and was almost the only Irish one which this year did become law.

Not long afterwards Mr. Gladstone published in a collected form the two Vatican pamphlets and an article he had recently contributed to the *Quarterly Review*. In a preface, too, he showed himself more violent against the Vatican than he had done in his former publications. He went so far as to say that this ecclesiastical council at Rome would not, when practical, stop "even before the issue of blood for the accomplishment of its aims." Commenting on this assertion, the newspaper which had been considered in Ulster the most earnest in its advocacy of the great remedial policy Mr. Gladstone had pursued for so many years, and was supposed to be most devoted to himself personally, said in a leading article of the language of this preface: "It is almost as violent as has ever been used by any No-Popery orator in the North of Ireland, and is very much indeed in the style of Mr. Newdegate, though more passionate, and we had almost written hysterical. We are bound to say that we have never read any composition of Mr. Gladstone with less satisfaction than this preface. The higher our admiration for him is, and has so long been, the more deeply we regret that he should now express

himself in so strong, vehement, and sectarian spirit."

This condemnation of their political leader, a they had for nearly ten years considered Mr Gladstone to be, had the approval generally of th Ulster Liberals. By none of them was it disavowed One of the ablest of them said, "It is most unstatesmanlike; it is Orange; it is sickening. Surely after all that he has done and said as Prime Minister Mr. Gladstone must have gone mad."

Madness it did certainly seem to some Ulster Liberals as well as Tories to attempt afterwards by any legislation to conciliate men who were most popular in the South and West when they showed that they were most uncompromising foes of what they called exclusively the British Government Mr. John Martin had been twice elected for Meath Mr. John Mitchel, his brother-in-law, was now, a O'Donovan Rossa had been, elected for Tipperary By those who watched events in Ulster, those elections were considered to be of great significance for Mr. John Martin and Mr. John Mitchel were both Ulster men, whose names were as familiar to the new generation as household words.

They had been schoolboys together. They had indeed long resided near one another. John Martin was born at Loughorne, little more than four miles distant from Newry; John Mitchel, though born in County Derry, had long been associated with the same town. As friends, and subsequently relations by marriage, they were much attached to

each other. They both suffered in the same cause; but they were apparently men of very different dispositions. Martin was quiet, simple, and natural; Mitchel, excitable, rash, and very difficult to control even by his friend and brother-in-law. In 1848 his language in denouncing Lord Clarendon as Lord Lieutenant and the Government was most violent, and difficult, as has been said, to reconcile with ordinary sanity. He advised the citizens of Dublin to pour vitriol on the heads of Her Majesty's troops as they passed under the windows. Broken glass and vitriol were Mr. Mitchel's weapons of warfare in Dublin, while thrones were tottering on the Continent and the revolutionary spirit was extending like a conflagration in an American forest. Lord Clarendon, a very humane nobleman, was, as the Queen's representative, by this member of the Young Ireland party called Her Majesty's Butcher-general.

If this was not seditious, what could be? Mitchel was afterwards tried for his seditious writings in the *United Irishman*. His recent biographer, William Dillon, admits that certain of Mitchel's articles in that newspaper were "about as seditious as it was possible for language to be."[1]

But as usual the justice of John Mitchel's conviction was technically questioned by the Nationalists. The manner in which he escaped from Van Diemen's Land, after suddenly handing in his ticket-of-leave to a magistrate, without notice, and, as he said himself, armed with a ponderous riding whip and pistols in

[1] Dillon's *Life of John Mitchel*, vol. i., p. 222.

the breast pocket of his coat, and galloping off with a friendly accomplice as fast as two horses could carry them, admitted of no justifiable excuse. This even Mr. Justin M'Carthy has acknowledged. The parole was broken.

At the general election of the preceding year, Mitchel had been started against Colonel White and Hon. William O'Callaghan. As they had publicly cautioned the electors that votes given to an escaped convict would be thrown away, he was not at that time returned. He paid, however, in the summer a tentative visit to Ireland, and was by the connivance of the Government allowed to come and go unmolested. Anticipating an early vacancy in Tipperary, he left an appeal to the electors asking them to return him as a representative of the sovereign independence of Ireland. These were his own words.

He was chosen without a contest. The same evening Mr. Disraeli gave notice of a resolution to be moved two days afterwards declaring Mitchel incapable of being elected and returned to Parliament, and directing the Speaker to issue a new writ for the county of Tipperary. Some opposition was made by Home Rulers to the resolution on the ground that the trial of election petitions was now entrusted to the judges, and that the validity of the return ought to be decided in a court of law. But both parties supported the resolution, and it was carried by a very large majority. Mitchel himself landed at Queenstown the day after his election, and

the day before the resolution respecting his incapacity was affirmed in the House of Commons. He was again elected, but not without a contest. It is probable that his opponent would have been seated on the plea that votes given to an unqualified person were thrown away; but Mitchel was sinking into his grave. He had gone to Cork to deliver a lecture; but he was too ill to fulfil the task. From Cork he went to Dublin, on his way to Newry. On arriving at his old home in the North of Ireland he was very ill. He wrote an address thanking the electors of Tipperary for returning him a second time. This was his last effort. It was dated the 17th of February. Three days afterwards Mitchel, who had not seemed conscious that his end was approaching, died in a quiet sleep. He was buried in the Unitarian cemetery in the High Street of Newry. His brother-in-law, John Martin, was at the funeral. It was noticed that as he stood by the grave he was pale and ill. He had to be assisted into the carriage on returning from the funeral. A week afterwards he too died, and in the same house, Mitchel's, Dramalane.

These two deaths, the one so soon following the other, caused a sensation in Ulster, where the two men had been so long known. They were, it was said, "the last of the '48 men." Both died as they had lived. Both had the hereditary spirit of a United Irishman. A little time before their deaths they had both written letters to the principal Ulster Liberal newspaper, complaining of articles which had appeared in it, and which they felt all the more because

they could not represent it as "Tory," or in a way being under sinister influences. Of the t men John Martin was the more easily manageable a was always the more moderate. He had become t secretary of the Home Rule Association, but h resigned the office to assist his brother-in-law Tipperary. Mitchel was to the last thorough irreconcilable. Thus he lived, and thus he died.

In their last years, in the North of Ireland, t two men could scarcely be said to have had a follo ing. Among the Ulster Liberals they had admirers, no sympathisers. In the South Mitch had what he considered as a fit audience, and was not few. His name was there regarded synonymous with sedition. His violence and h exaggerations were recommendations. The sam disposition still exists, and will continue to exist. cannot be too distinctly understood that, as w shown in those successive Tipperary elections, th lawless and defiant spirit had not been conciliate it had in no respect been altered by the gre remedial measures Mr. Gladstone and his colleagu had then carried for Ireland, nor has it in any w been laid at rest by still more recent concession Martin and Mitchel were most applauded a their memories are still cherished because the were acknowledged to be rebels from princip This spirit, whatever may be pretended, is essentiall anarchical.

To exaggerate the criminality of those me would be difficult. Martin expressly recommende

Mitchel to the electors of Tipperary on the ground that he was not in favour of constitutional action but of an appeal to arms. As Mr. Bright said at this time, though the admission appeared somewhat strange in a member of the Society of Friends, war for native independence might be excusable, and perhaps even justifiable, if it could be entered upon with any prospect of success. But a war for the separation of Ireland from Great Britain, which was what Mitchel meant when he asked the electors of Tipperary to vote for him as a representative of the sovereign independence of his country, was of course hopeless and suicidal. An outbreak might have deluged the island in blood; but this was the worst that could have happened. To attempt to withstand the whole strength of the British Empire, with its ships of war commanding every Irish lough, strait, and river, would have been a ludicrous impossibility. The Orangemen of the North and their Protestant sympathisers generally, as well as the Ulster Liberals, would under any circumstances have stood by the Crown and the Government. No Irish Nationalists then, nor at any time, could put them down. Inferior in numbers, though that inferiority from a military point of view then was, and is now, not so great as is sometimes taken for granted, they are far superior in every fighting quality. Those who, like the two "'48 men," Messrs. Martin and Mitchel, would therefore precipitate the country into a bloody strife against irresistible force, could only be regarded as great criminals. Such undoubtedly, with all their

Ulster associations, and with all their Presbyteri and Unitarian convictions, the two brothers-in-l could justly be regarded. We find it said in Hom that, houseless, tribeless, friendless must be he w would involve his country in a civil war. Su language in the reputed Father of Poetry sounds li a curse. From such a curse Messrs. Mitchel a Martin could not justly consider themselves exempt

These Tipperary elections had no inconsiderab influence on the Government and the Liberal membe of the Opposition in their determination to pus forward the new Peace Preservation Act. It w represented as a kind of consolidation Act of fou measures passed at various times, two of them durin the years 1870 and 1871, even while Mr. Gladstone first administration might still be regarded as in it prime, and had shown such an earnest desi and so much ability to carry out an Irish remedi policy.

Mr. Butt and the Home Rulers opposed the ne measure, which of course they called a Coercion Ac It was supported by Lord Hartington as the leade of the Opposition, and not opposed by Mr. Gladston who was on this question understood to agree wit his noble friend. As one of the Acts which were t be modified expired in June, and others at the begi ning of the following year, 1876, it was necessar that the measure should be hurried through i various stages. It was thus the first of the mini terial Bills which became law during the session

But the Home Rulers were now engaged in orga

ising a great celebration for the centenary of O'Connell's birthday, the 6th of August. His statue of which the foundation-stone had been laid with such an imposing and defiant display many years before, had not yet been erected. No effort had been made to complete it. At last, out of mere shame, the hoarding which had been put round the spot had been taken away.

The 6th of August was of course regarded "as a great day for Ireland:" Ireland that has had so many great days! A large platform had been erected near Carlisle Bridge and the foot of Sackville Street, which had not yet by the Dublin Corporation been formally changed by name into O'Connell Street. Lord O'Hagan, whose paper on his going to the Irish Bar had been signed by O'Connell, who, as has been stated, had been one of the Liberator's counsel both at the trial and on the appeal to the House of Lords, when the judgment was reversed, was announced to deliver an address. His eldest daughter was, however, very ill, and indeed that kindly lady soon afterwards died. The Home Rule Press, which was becoming more and more extreme, hinted that Lord O'Hagan's inability to attend the O'Connell centenary celebration was political. It was fortunate that Mr. Gladstone's late Irish Lord Chancellor was not present at this Dublin demonstration. The address he had been announced to deliver was not permitted to be read, and had in dumb show to be handed to the Press. Thoughtful, eloquent, and conciliatory, it was utterly unexceptional from the point of view of O'Connell himself. But

some of the Home Rulers, Mr. O'Connor Power among the number, stated that had Lord O'Hagan been present, they would not have remained on the platform to listen to a Whig placeman. This, too, after all that had been done for Ireland by Mr. Gladstone's Government, of which Lord O'Hagan was one of the most distinguished Irish members.

Mr. Isaac Butt, who, thirty years before, had been one of O'Connell's ablest Orange opponents in the Dublin Corporation, was now the Home Rule hero of the hour. He was applauded to the echo by those who would not listen to the reading of Lord O'Hagan's address. Thus were the relative positions of the two men reversed. At the banquet given the same evening by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Lord O'Hagan's old friend, Sir Gavan Duffy, who afterwards recalled their former personal relations in a very touching letter, was not allowed to speak to the toast of the legislative independence of Ireland. Mr. Butt was again loudly called for. He was understood to reflect on the Lord Mayor, who complained that he too could not be heard. There were a great uproar and general confusion, amid which the gas was turned off, and the guests had to get out of the exhibition building as best they could, many of them without hats or overcoats. Such was the fact, and as a gentleman from Cork said in the last words heard before the company thus broke up, the disgraceful termination of this great day for Ireland.

The dissensions between the two parties continued.

The O'Connell Centenary Committee had to be dissolved. But Mr. Butt's ascendency, which had now reached its highest point, soon afterwards began to wane. A small party had already been formed against him, and of it The O'Gorman Mahon, Mr. Ronayne, and Mr. Biggar were the more prominent members. Mr. Parnell, too, was returned as Mr. Martin's successor for Meath. It had already become known that the young man had independent views of his own. Some of the principal supporters of Mr. Butt felt and expressed their apprehensions as to the course the new Member for Meath would take. He was appointed chairman of the Amnesty Committee, which represented the more extreme Home Rule or Nationalist element in opposition to Mr. Butt and a professedly moderate policy. Coming events were casting their shadows before.

CHAPTER XVIII

1876—1879

An Interregnum in Irish Politics—A More Moderate Spiri among the Orangemen—Sir M. Hicks-Beach's Visit t Belfast—The Words "Whig" and "Tory"—The "Charte Toast"—Mr. Gladstone's Visit to Ireland—His Speech i Dublin—Declining the Ulster Invitation—An Election fo County Down—Lord Castlereagh and the Family of Andrew —Lord Dufferin's Return from Canada—Death of Professo Smyth—A New Election for County Derry—A New Irish University Bill—Death of Mr. Butt—How his Successor wa Regarded in Ulster.

We now enter on what may be called an interregnum in Irish politics. Ulster, which had been so deeply moved by the Church question and the land question, to say nothing of other incidental subjects, such as party processions, began to feel something like comparative repose. It was not that there was any apathy or indifference. The Tenant Right Associations continued to be more or less active, and the necessity for revising the Irish Land Act of 1870 was being generally recognised by the tenant farmers who were Ulster Liberals.

But there was a Conservative Government in power. It had at its command a comparatively large

and steadily voting majority, while Mr. Gladstone's retirement from the leadership of the Liberal party, and the sectarian questions to which he had devoted his leisure, checked all expectations among his old followers of any further attempts at heroic legislation during the continuance of that Parliament.

One of the circumstances which for a time greatly contributed to the quiet of Ulster was the more moderate spirit shown by the Orangemen. So far from the disestablishment of the Church having left bitter memories behind it, the fact undoubtedly was that, as has already been stated, the supporters of the late Establishment, being no longer on the defensive, became much more conciliatory than they had ever been since the first Hillsborough meeting of more than forty years before. There was very little to gain by sectarian agitation. The most uncompromising of No Popery agitators in Ulster could scarcely say more against the Pope and the Vatican than Mr. Gladstone himself had done. During the two successive 12ths of July, 1875 and 1876, it was observed that the Orange orators declaimed less against the Pope than they had been accustomed to do. They did not like to follow Mr. Gladstone and give him any credit for No Popery zeal. Their embarrassment was somewhat ludicrous. They found themselves outdone by the great Liberal statesman. The repeal of the Party Processions Act had also taken away a recognised grievance from the lower classes of Orangemen. Mr. William Johnston, M.P., though he complained that Orangemen were too much

neglected by the Conservative Government, which in the North of Ireland depended upon their votes, was now one of the reliable supporters of Mr. Disraeli and his colleagues.

Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the Irish Chief Secretary, visited Belfast. It was observed that, though moderation personified, he called himself a Tory. One of the Irish Conservative newspapers protested against the use of the word, and entreated the Irish Chief Secretary to call himself a Constitutionalist. He retorted on those who objected to the word Tory, that in Ireland it was at least as popular as Whig. Mr. Butt and his followers, like Mr. Parnell and his party afterwards, always thought that Whig was the most severe epithet they could use against the Ulster Liberals who declined to commit themselves to Home Rule.

It was, I was told, at this time not an uncommon thing for the Orangemen in their lodges to quarrel to such an extent as to form themselves in different parties at the two sides of the room, and commence a pitched battle. A scene like this was described by a correspondent, and its accuracy at the time was not denied. Even in the Grand Lodge of Ireland, where the members assemble under great noblemen and representatives of the House of Commons, similar scenes have been said to occur. When Mr. Dalway was expelled from the Society by the Grand Lodge for proposing Sir Shafto Adair as a candidate for Antrim, one who was present said that had Mr. Johnston, who defended Mr. Dalway, not left early to

go down by the two o'clock train to attend a Conservative demonstration in Belfast, his supporters might have put an end to the proceedings by bringing the matter to a regular "set to." "Is such a result a common occurrence?" I asked with surprise. "Oh yes," said my informant, "very common."

There was then undoubtedly a better feeling between the two extreme sections than there had been for a long time. Conservative country gentlemen at their convivial entertainments as grand jurors did not rail at their Catholic fellow-subjects as they had been accustomed to do thirty or even twenty years previously. The Charter toast had nearly ceased to be given at such dinners. That celebrated toast was now being regarded as an anachronism. As showing, however, the spirit which animated a large number of Protestant grand jurors against their Catholic fellow-countrymen, this toast may be here given:

"To the glorious, pious, and immortal memory of the great and good King William the Third (not forgetting Oliver Cromwell), who saved us all from Popes and Popery, knaves and knavery, slaves and slavery, brass money, and wooden shoes.

"And all that refuse to drink this toast, may they be rammed, stammed, crammed, and damned into the great gun of Athlone, to be blown over the hills of damnation. May their teeth be converted into paving stones, to pave the way of the Croppies into hell, and their blood into train oil to light their souls to damnation. May I be at the end of the gun

with a fiery flambeau to send them burring round the earth, the moon, the stars, and the sea, like flies round a sugar cask on a hot summer afternoon; may they be blown against the rock of blastation and come down in a shower of innumerable pieces, and may those pieces be picked up and made into sparables to mend the soles of Orangemen's boots to walk on the 12th of July."

Such was the Charter toast. From the convivial point of view, it can only be regarded as an elaborate joke. It is certain that the Catholics did not regard it as a joke; but thought it, as it was, offensive and insulting. Though at the time now referred to it still lingered in the memories of many thousands of people, during a later period, notwithstanding that the Home Rule question became very serious, it has not generally been drunk by grand jurors, and by the younger generation of the better classes of Orangemen themselves it has even been considered a mere fabrication, a thing devised by the enemy. But eight-and-twenty years ago the toast was regarded as undoubtedly genuine. The first copy of it I received was from Dr. James M'Knight, the veteran journalist already mentioned, then of the *Derry Standard*, whose long experience and knowledge of Ulster could scarcely be exceeded. A second copy, while this work was being written, was forwarded to me by the High Sheriff of Down, William Liddell, Esq., J.P., of Lurgan, who obtained it from another gentleman of the county well acquainted with all the

traditions and ways of the old race of Protestant grand jurors in Ulster. Another country gentleman in Tyrone, remarkable for his moderation and conciliatory character, also assured me many years ago that he had himself been present when the Charter toast was proposed at a dinner of grand jurors in Omagh. In the ordinary Orange lodges, this so-called Charter toast has more recently been drunk; but some of those who are in the secrets of the Brethren say that it is only given briefly as the Charter toast, without the words, of which even the humblest Orangeman would justly now be ashamed.

It was remarked in the reports of the Orange meetings of the 12th of July during several consecutive summers, that the speaking continued to be very moderate. Scarcely a breath seemed to stir up the old bitter waters of strife. This was owing not only to the growing moderation in the rank and file of the Orangemen themselves, but also to the policy pursued by their leaders. When Liberal Governments were in office, those Orange leaders construed all their acts with great severity and did not hesitate to appeal as against them to the extreme prejudices of their followers. The Orange Society was thus used for political objects, which it professedly disclaimed, and which were not, when fairly interpreted, very compatible with that cause of civil and religious liberty to which it professed to be devoted. Liberal Chief Secretaries and Liberal Lord Lieutenants were represented as the nominees of Cardinal Cullen.

The fact even that the Irish Cardinal was opposed to Home Rule and did his best to keep his clergy from taking a part in the agitation was overlooked. Except on the education question, the Cardinal took very little interest in political matters. Lord O'Hagan, who ought to have been well informed, said that his Eminence never cared to do what he could to make things pleasant to Liberal any more than to Conservative administrations. From the Orange leaders, however, no Liberal administration received fair play, while Conservative Chief Secretaries were for the most part very indulgently treated.

This was a kind of systematic, if an almost unconsciously systematic, policy on the part of the Orange leaders. Most of them would not have confessed it to themselves. It was indeed remarkable that, when the Orangemen were encouraged to act as mere partisans of Conservative Governments, and bitter opponents of all Liberal administrations, the Union was not seriously endangered. As, however, the agitation in favour of Home Rule proceeded and showed symptoms of getting beyond Mr. Butt's control, the Orangemen began to bluster less than they had ever previously done, while at the same time they became more determined in favour of the Union. This is a fact of great significance.

Mr. Butt sought to retain his position by bringing in practical measures of reform. One of these was a Land Bill for establishing absolute fixity of tenure, by providing, as it professed to do, for continuous occupation with a periodical revision of rents. He also

brought forward an Irish University Bill, in which his old Conservative sympathies with Trinity College were combined with a proposal to establish a Catholic institution, and also to retain one of the Queen's Colleges as a third. The plan was very imperfectly developed, and though, after it was withdrawn, subsequently revived, was not generally supported.

At the time when her Majesty was declared Empress of India, Mr. Butt recommended that the remaining Fenian prisoners should be released. But notwithstanding the energetic efforts of the Father of Home Rule to keep himself at the head of the movement in carrying out a constitutional policy, the great demonstration at Ardagh, near Edgworthstown, in Longford, where Oliver Goldsmith mistook a baronet's old-fashioned residence for an inn, showed plainly that as Young Ireland superseded O'Connell's agitation for the Repeal of the Union, irreconcilable Irish Nationalism would prove too strong for Mr. Butt and his moderate friends. He too was getting old, and his physical infirmities were increasing. This was obvious to anyone who saw him in his last visit to the North of Ireland. Mr. Parnell, as John Martin's successor in Meath, was still called Young Parnell, and he and his somewhat unprepossessing Achates, Mr. Biggar, sneered at the old leader's want of energy. They were not amenable to his discipline; it seemed their pleasure to act an independent part. It was truly said by one of Mr. Gladstone's warmest supporters in Ulster: "What the Home Ruler of four or five years ago was to the Whig and moderate Liberal

the Nationalist or Fenian is now becoming to Home Ruler."

The session of 1877 was singularly unfruitful legislative measures. But the Irish Judicature Bi legacy of the former Government of four years bef at last was passed, as well as a measure extending jurisdiction of the Irish County Courts

In the autumn Mr. Gladstone, who had cea assailing the Pope and the Vatican, paid his first a last visit to Ireland. He made no public entry i Dublin, but was for some days in the fourth week October the guest of Lord Meath at Kilrudd House. Thence he was able to make pleasant exc sions in the neighbourhood, and afterwards by degr visited public buildings in Dublin: St. Patric Cathedral and other sacred edifices, Trinity Colle and the Bank of Ireland, once the Irish House Parliament. It was again and again stated th he had firmly resolved to make no public spee He repeated this resolution in a letter to Maj Crawford, of Crawfordsburn, the brother of t then Liberal member for County Down; b before that letter was published this silence w broken. It was first broken on an address to t students of Trinity College, but after this spee which was of course non-political, was made, answer to many importunities, he still declared th he came only to see and hear and would not open mouth on political affairs.

To see and hear the poorer people he travell in a third-class carriage from Bray to Rathdru

He visited on foot many picturesque parts of Wicklow. Near Glendalough he went to the crevice in the rock which is called the bed of St. Kevin. During his visit to Ireland, Sir Walter Scott, accompanied by Lord Plunket, paid a visit to St. Kevin's bed. Lord Plunket afterwards told the female guide that their visitor was a poet. "A poet," she exclaimed; "devil a bit of him, but an honourable gentleman, he gave me half-a-crown."

Mr. Gladstone repaired to Lord Fitzwilliam's residence, Coolattin. The weather, which had up to this time been very fine, suddenly changed, and during one of his walks he had a thorough wetting. This was to be regretted, because it probably prevented him, as was remarked at the time, seeing the extensive farming operations then being carried out by this public-spirited nobleman, as they had been begun by his predecessors. Seventy workmen were employed in keeping in repair the farms and cottages on the estate. Had many great Irish landlords with similar opportunities acted in a similar spirit, there might not have been a land question, with the perplexing problem of dual ownership, to occupy for so many years the time and labour of statesmen and legislatures.

Mr. Gladstone found, as other visitors have found, the peasants with whom he sought to enter into conversation not very communicative. They did not know who he was, and one of them thought, as the statesman took long walks about the country, that he was a land agent or valuator examining the im-

provements, and perhaps inclined to recommend the raising of the rents. Some of the people looked at him with much curiosity. It was said, "There is no doubt that he has some great scheme in hand; but if he wishes to know the peasants, he ought to sit in their cabins and smoke his pipe." He visited Powerscourt, and saw of course the Dargle and other charming scenery in the neighbourhood. At Lord Monck's, when he became known, he was also received very well by the people. It was thought that the publication of the Vatican pamphlets and other attacks on the Pope and his Council might interfere with the cordiality of his reception. The Catholic bishops generally had no part in the welcome; but he called on one of them, and he took an opportunity of visiting the Catholic schools.

From the demesne of the Duke of Leinster, Mr. Gladstone walked over to Maynooth. There he saw a copy of *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*. He declared laughingly that he had made it a rule to exclude Hansard from his country house. In the grounds he remarked that some of the trees were in awkward positions and advised their removal. "The best way," Mr. Gladstone said, "to make trees grow is to cut them down." The Vice-President of the College, Dr. M'Carthy, showed him several editions of the Bible, including Luther's, and told him that he had more than 200 editions in his own study. "This," he said, "is an answer to those who declare that the Catholics are not permitted to read the Bible like the Protestants." Mr. Gladstone delivered a speech to

the boys of a Reformatory and Industrial School, and immediately afterwards he again broke his resolution not to speak publicly at all on Irish soil. It is the first step that costs. Mr. Gladstone while in Queen's County received an invitation from the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Dublin to accept the freedom of the city, and also after the ceremony to be present at a public luncheon.

The reception Mr. Gladstone met in the City Hall on this occasion, if not enthusiastic was more than cordial. His political opponents, both Conservative and Home Rule, joined in the compliment, only one of the municipal representatives of the capital declining to take any part in the proceedings or to subscribe to the expense. This was the somewhat eccentric Alderman M'Swiney. Mr. Butt was there and spoke. His name had, after the recent Act, been the first inscribed on the roll of honorary citizens; Mr. Gladstone's was the second.

In both his addresses the British statesman dwelt elaborately on the great progress Ireland was making. It was obvious to the most casual observers; it was to be seen wherever he had gone. Mr. Gladstone dwelt strongly on the growing prosperity of the country as shown by its agricultural statistics. Not a word fell from his lips implying that Ireland was suffering any disadvantages from the Act of Union. His picture was from first to last rose-coloured. He complimented his audience on the results of the Church Act and the Land Act, on the increase of live stock, of ground under tillage, of the tonnage of the port of Dublin,

and on the manner in which five hundred purchasers under the Church Commissioners had availed themselves of the facilities offered to become proprietors of their farms. He referred also with satisfaction to the Bright Clauses of the Land Act, and he declared that he attached great importance to increasing the number of small proprietors, though not in England. He quoted from an address which had been presented to him from Ulster containing these remarkable words, with which he said he agreed: "Rents have risen and have been more punctually paid and better secured, and the statistics of sales show a large addition to the marketable value of landed property. Thus have the landlords themselves shared in the advantages which the legislative changes have conferred upon the tenants."

Mr. Gladstone had been invited to Belfast as well as to Cork. He remained several days longer in Ireland; but he declined both the Northern and Southern invitations. In reference to the invitation he had received from Ulster, a gentleman remarked in his presence: "Surely it is a cold wind that blows from the North." Many of his Northern admirers did not like some of the vague language he used in his two Dublin speeches about political arrangements being decided, not according to circumstances but by the general opinion of mankind, and by their conformity to the principles of justice and virtue. "I am convinced," Mr. Gladstone said, "these principles are beginning to be truly understood and beginning to be carried out here."

This language was quoted with some surprise among those who had given Mr. Gladstone the invitation to Belfast and the North of Ireland. In declining the invitation to Ulster, Mr. Gladstone encouraged the hope that in a very short time, perhaps in the following year, he might be able to pay this visit. It was not paid. Mr. Gladstone has never been in Ulster, and now will never pay his promised visit. His eldest son, whom he has lost, was in Belfast at the time the Conservatives were entertaining Lord Cairns on his appointment as Lord Justice of Appeal. He expressed surprise at the demonstration, and especially at some of the language used.

The day after Mr. Gladstone left Dublin from the North Wall for Holyhead in a storm, one of his warmest Ulster admirers said: "When he does again cross the Channel he is pledged to visit the North. His reception among the Ulster tenant farmers of all denominations would indeed astonish him and be far beyond what he has witnessed or could witness in any other part of the country." It was also remarked in so many words: "It is very strange that so earnest a statesman who has visited so many lands, and taken so deep an interest in so many foreign countries, who can address Italians at Florence in good Tuscan, and who can talk with Greek patriarchs in modern Greek, should only visit Ireland for the first time when he is about sixty-eight years of age and when, as he has himself announced, his ministerial career is over."

The tenant farmers of Ulster, who as Liber
ranked among Mr. Gladstone's supporters, were d
appointed at the visit to the province not being pa
Had Mr. Gladstone come then he would by th
undoubtedly have been well received. But ev
some of his best friends in Ulster had doubts
the prudence of a visit at that time. Mr. Gla
stone could not have come to Ulster without maki
Belfast his headquarters, and without being public
entertained. The example of Dublin would
expected to be followed. But it was certa
that the Mayor and Town Council of Belfa
would not have welcomed the author of the Iri
Church Act and of the Land Act. There was
difficulty too about whose guest he should b
Lord and Lady Dufferin were absent in Canada. S
Thomas M'Clure, who had received his baronet
from Mr. Gladstone with the reminder from him th
it was a hereditary honour, had just taken to himse
a wife and was on his wedding tour. Major Crawfor
of Crawfordsburn, the son of the William Sharma
Crawford who had so gallantly fought the election
1852 in County Down on tenant-right principl
was an aged bachelor, and Mr. Gladstone was
course expected to be accompanied by Mrs. Gladstor
Lord Lurgan resided at Lurgan, twenty miles fro
Belfast, and was understood to be far from we
Lord Waveney, the late Sir Shafto Adair, was a st
greater distance off at Ballymena, and he had recent
become a widower. It was not of course to
expected that any of the great Conservative landlor

and peers near Belfast would think of asking the late Liberal Prime Minister to accept of their hospitality.

Some of these difficulties were in a private letter pointed out to Mr. Gladstone. It was understood that if he did come northward, he was, however, to be the guest of Major Crawford. Crawfordsburn is very pleasantly situated, some nine miles from Belfast, and two miles from the flourishing watering place of Bangor. The house looks upon the sea, and may indeed be regarded as a marine residence. There is a romantic glen, which is the delight of the humbler holiday makers of Belfast, who were allowed the enjoyment of the grounds so liberally that they regarded them as public, and even as belonging to them by a kind of prescriptive right. When this indiscriminate permission was withdrawn, several correspondents wrote indignant letters to the newspapers, advising subscriptions for the commencement of a lawsuit against the proprietor of the grounds. These the public had begun to regard as their own. The fact was that the good nature of two generations of the Crawford family had allowed picnic parties, children's schools, and excursions of all kinds, to spend pleasant days by the glen without any restriction.

Mr. James Sharman Crawford, the third son, who was now a sitting member of the constituency for which his father could not be returned, was most anxious that Mr. Gladstone should be his brother's guest at Crawfordsburn. All preparations for the reception were being made, when a letter was received from Mr. Gladstone, by the member for Down, stating

that he could not come to the North of Ireland then; but that he hoped to do so very soon, perhaps in the following autumn. "Well, we shall have him then," said Mr. Crawford; "and we shall then all do our best to make him welcome."

But Mr. Crawford, who was then looking forward so hopefully to the next autumn, was in delicate health. Entering Parliament late in life, he found the long hours a great strain on a somewhat enfeebled constitution. During the last three sessions he had introduced a Land Bill which was intended to make the legal recognition of the Ulster custom more explicit and to extend its principles as fully as possible to the South. Mr. Crawford's measure received little support from the professedly Home Rulers, and none whatever from Mr. Parnell and Mr. Biggar, with their small but increasing band of obstructives, who were gradually becoming too strong for Mr. Butt. At the convention in Dublin, early in 1878, the Father of Home Rule, the old man, found himself virtually set aside by his rebellious children, in favour of Mr. Parnell, who had said that he was a young man, and could therefore afford to wait. Both Mr. Butt and Mr. Parnell have gone. It has already been said that in reviewing these experiences of little more than a quarter of a century, the shadow of death seems nearly everywhere present.

Mr. James Sharman Crawford died in the spring. It was the first loss which the Ulster Liberal representation sustained during the year 1878; but it was not the last. The vacancy which had been spoken of as

likely to occur two years before, by the elevation of Lord A. Edwin Hill-Trevor to the peerage, did not at that time take place. The reason was, that it was very well known another Liberal candidate would be started, and was not unlikely to be returned. Lord Castlereagh, whose name had been mentioned as that of the Conservative candidate, now came forward to contest the late Mr. Crawford's seat, and his opponent, whose name had also been previously mentioned as that of the Liberal candidate, whenever the anticipated vacancy might occur, was Mr. Andrews, a distinguished lawyer on the north-east circuit, now Mr. Justice Andrews, and the son of the late Mr. John Andrews who had for many years been the agent for the Londonderry estate in his native county of Down. That the son should oppose Lord Castlereagh, who was the heir to the extensive property as well as to the rich coal mines in the county of Durham, was a proof of honourable independence. By Mr. John Andrews, the Londonderry estate in Down had been very liberally managed on the principles of the Ulster custom so dear to the tenant farmers in the North of Ireland. The family was very popular in the county, and especially in the Ards district, in which the Londonderry property is situated, extending down to the treacherous Strangford Lough, which through the absence of railway accommodation is still less known than so picturesque a sheet of water, with its outlet to the sea, deserves to be.

The election had some remarkable and unexpected features. When Mr. Crawford contested Down at the

previous general election, Mr. Johnston, the once independent Orangeman, denounced him in a placard as a Home Ruler. There was not the slightest foundation for this assertion. It soon appeared that Lord Castlereagh, then twenty-six years of age and only recently married to a charming lady, was disposed to treat the Home Rule question very tenderly. Under the management of a skilful electioneering agent, every effort was made to obtain the Catholic vote for the Conservative candidate. At that time Lord Castlereagh showed very little of the ability which he has developed as the Marquis of Londonderry. He now has a broad and vigorous grasp of Irish questions, and can speak on them with a clearness and directness which produce much effect, both in the House of Lords and on public platforms. What he said during this contest in Down was not at all striking. It was the first time that a Conservative candidate in an Ulster constituency appealed to the Catholic electors against a Liberal competitor.

The education question was then before the House of Commons. The Government had brought in an Irish Intermediate Education Bill, which they succeeded in passing. It skilfully avoided debatable questions, and was generally well received by both parties. Mr. Parnell boasted that he had forced it on the ministry by the obstructive tactics he and Mr. Biggar had now developed into a system.

A new Irish University Bill was foreshadowed. As Mr. Andrews could give no pledge on the subject, he had undoubtedly the hostility of a portion of Dr.

Dorrian's clergy. It was said, too, that very satisfactory assurances had been given of the liberality of the Londonderry family to the Catholics. The result was that Mr. Andrews was defeated. The Liberal victory of four years before was reversed; but in his professions at least, Lord Castlereagh seemed quite as Liberal as his competitor. Lord Beaconsfield had said that Lord Castlereagh was a very promising young nobleman. It was retorted by the noble Viscount's opponents during this election, that the Prime Minister's remark was just, because no other candidate had ever previously been known to have made so many promises. The Marquis's performances have been very much better than those promises.

The secretary of the Ulster Home Rule Association afterwards wrote a letter boasting that he and his friends had been the cause of Mr. Andrews's defeat. They had urged the Home Rulers to support Lord Castlereagh because he had, as was said, given the most satisfactory promises in favour of denominational education and Home Rule. This secretary was called upon to quote the direct terms of those alleged promises; but they were not published. That Lord Castlereagh received a considerable amount of Catholic and Home Rule support could not, however, be disputed.

It was creditable to his lordship that his kindly relations with the family of Andrews were not disturbed by the contest in the county of Down. Many members of that family reside in and round the town of Comber, seven miles from Belfast, and

not far from the Londonderry estate. Some of them are associated with the linen manufacture and other industries which flourish in the North of Ireland, but have struck little root in the South. Lord Londonderry is considered among their best friends.

But when this election occurred the Government did show a strong inclination to denominational education. This was obvious in some of their appointments of Commissioners under the Intermediate Education Act, which was just passed at the end of the session. Mr. Butt and many of his Home Rulers also supported the Government in the most important of the divisions, that in which Lord Hartington, as leader of the Opposition, moved a resolution of censure on Lord Beaconsfield and his colleagues, for the manner in which they had dealt with the Eastern question, especially with respect to Greece and for the guarantee given by the Anglo-Turkish Convention of the integrity of the remaining territories of Turkey in Asia. After four nights' debate the resolution was defeated by a majority of 143, made up to some extent by Mr. Butt and Home Rulers under his immediate influence. For taking this course the Father of Home Rule was himself censured by the Committee of the Association. It seemed somewhat inconsistent in a professed Home Ruler to support the ostentatious Imperialism of the Conservative Government. Mr. Butt's influence had already declined; it was almost at an end. One afternoon as he walked out of the House of Commons with Mr. Hugh Law, he was met

by the gentleman upon whom he called in Belfast when there was about to be a vacancy in the borough of Newry. The following words passed :—

"Well, Mr. Butt, you did come into the Parliament of Westminster after all."

"Yes, I submitted to the infliction. As I told you, I would rather be in a Parliament in College Green."

"When is that likely to be ?"

The Father of Home Rule laughed, and said as he walked along, "Sooner than you expect."

He appeared to be a mere wreck. He walked with difficulty and breathed shortly.

It was remarked to Mr. Law, "Butt is greatly changed."

"Yes, he is no longer what he was, even when he began the agitation for Home Rule."

"He does not look satisfied."

"No," replied Mr. Law, "he is dissatisfied with himself, and he knows quite well that he is breaking up. His life has been a hard one. I am sorry for him."

In the autumn, Lord Dufferin, having fulfilled his term of office as Viceroy, returned from Canada. He was of course very cordially received in the Corporation Hall by the Mayor of Belfast and the municipal representatives of all parties. From that time the Conservatives not less than the Liberals were ready to do him honour. Nothing was more remarkable in his return than the readiness with which he recognised without the least difficulty the faces of those who had entertained him in the Ulster

Hall just before he left for the Dominion. He had forgotten none. It was, however, observed that his frock-coat might have been newer. "But I suppose," said one who remarked on the defect, "his lordship did not wish to have new suits made in Canada. Colonial clothes are not generally well-fitting." Lord Palmerston had a weakness for old hats. It was almost on the very day of his return to his Clandeboye Mansion, that Lord Dufferin surprised the wife of one of his tenant farmers, by walking unexpectedly into the farm house, with the greeting, "Well, Mrs. ——, how is your good man's rheumatism getting on?"

The public reception of the Viceroy of Canada by the Mayor and Corporation in Belfast had given much satisfaction. As Lord Dufferin had been entertained at a public banquet in the Ulster Hall on his departure for the Dominion, it was determined to give him one in celebration of his return. The assembly was composed of representative persons from all Ulster, and was very brilliant. Scarcely any such gathering of noblemen and gentlemen representing both the great political parties in Ulster had been known. It eclipsed the professedly neutral one given by the Mayor to Lord Cairns on his acceptance of the Judgeship of Appeal. Lord Dufferin declared that he was an Imperialist: that a British statesman engaged in representing his country far from the British shores became necessarily an Imperialist: but there was nothing aggressive, nothing of what was then called Jingoism, in his Imperialism.

At this public dinner most if not all the Ulster Liberal members were present. Among these Professor Smyth, who had taken his ticket, was through illness prevented from attending. He was a Presbyterian, a professor of Oriental languages in the Magee College, for some time after the death of Dr. James M'Knight editor of the *Derry Standard*, an able and accomplished man. He had also been twice Moderator of the Irish General Assembly. It was noticed that when he came to Belfast he looked pale; it was observed too that he afterwards seemed to walk with difficulty. At the house of a friend in the town he found himself so ill that he was obliged to remain. He said to the lady whom he had known in Londonderry, "How strange it will be if I have come to your house to die!"

He died in a few days. A vacancy occurred in the representation of his county. While Sir Thomas M'Clure, a much older man, stood at Professor Smyth's grave, it was suggested to him that he should be the Liberal candidate. After some apparent demur he consented. This indeed he could very appropriately do, because the representation of one of the seats for the county had been offered to him by the Liberals of Londonderry when he was prevailed upon by his friends to again contest the representation of Belfast against the coalition of the former Independent Orangeman and the moderate Conservative Presbyterian who had voted for Sir Thomas M'Clure himself at the previous election. Mr. Johnston indeed had recently accepted

a place as Inspector of Fisheries. He was succeeded by Mr. Ewart, afterwards Sir William, a highly respectable representative of the linen trade of Ulster, but one of those who were called the old Conservative nominators, and opposed to the Orange artisans, whom Mr. Johnston had when first returned professed to represent.

Sir Thomas M'Clure was under the circumstances the best selection the Liberals of the county of Londonderry could have made to contest the seat. He succeeded in defeating a popular Conservative landlord by more than six hundred votes. It was remarked, however, that he polled more than five hundred fewer than Professor Smyth, and more than two hundred fewer than Mr. Hugh Law at the former contest. The explanation afterwards given was that the Catholic vote was divided. Mr. Alexander had, it was said, pledged himself to the Catholic clergymen to support a Catholic University by a State endowment. This of course meant denominational education, to which Sir Thomas M'Clure, like most Ulster Liberal Presbyterians, was known to be opposed.

In the session of Parliament which had begun in the previous autumn, the promised Irish University Bill of the Government was introduced. It left Trinity College as it was. It did not propose to establish one great National University as Mr. Gladstone's Government had done in pursuance of the design of Queen Elizabeth, when Trinity College was expressly alluded to as "The Mother of a

University." But the Queen's University as a university conferring degrees was abolished, and the Queen's Colleges, the Catholic College or University in St. Stephen's Green, Dublin, and other collegiate institutions generally were affiliated to the new Royal University which became in fact, like the London University, a mere examining board. It was an unsatisfactory compromise, and could scarcely be said to have pleased any party. There was, however, a general desire to get rid of the question, which both Conservative and Liberal Governments had failed to settle. In alluding to these repeated failures Mr. Gladstone some time before said in the House of Commons that his Conservative rival and himself had both burnt their fingers with Irish University Bills. Mr. Disraeli, who had not then left the House of Commons, held up his right hand and said, "I see no scars."

But the question was at last dealt with. The Bill passed through both Houses of Parliament in the session which was continued into the summer of 1879, when rumours of another dissolution were in the air.

It excited considerable indignation in Ulster. For the very active part he took in carrying the measure, Lord Cairns was strongly condemned by the friends of the Queen's University, and especially by the professors of the Queen's College in Belfast, nearly all of whom continued Liberals. They had relied on the confident assurances they had

received from Professor Fawcett and others when Mr. Gladstone's University Bill was before the House of Commons. They were reminded that they would have done well to have accepted that measure, and that they had really gone farther and fared worse. "Who would have believed," said one of the ablest of those professors, "that the Liberal party would desert its avowed principles?" Who could have believed it! Events were in progress which were to lead to a still more sudden and tremendous desertion of a much greater principle than the one which it was said had been given up by the destruction of the Queen's University and the formation of the Royal. But that time was not yet.

As the University Bill was before the House of Commons Mr. Butt died. His end was not unexpected: it had already been very plainly foreshadowed. His influence as a Home Ruler may be said at the time of his death to have sunk to the lowest ebb. Mr. Parnell, with his obstructive policy and his declared independence of all British political parties, had begun to take the lead. Mr. Butt's condemnation of that policy had scarcely any effect except to weaken his own position. He had recently published two pamphlets addressed to his constituents at Limerick in defence of his conduct; but they may be said to have been quite disregarded.

In Ulster indeed the controversy between Mr. Butt and the Irish obstructives was watched with little sympathetic interest. The Unionists, whether Liberal or Conservative, had no preference between

the two rival leaders. They cared nothing for either. Mr. Butt's failure was by them always foreseen. It was in no respect regretted. The selection of Mr. Shaw, a banker of Cork, and a representative of that city, to be Mr. Butt's successor as a moderate Home Ruler appeared somewhat ludicrous. Mr. Butt's death closed one era in the Home Rule movement. Mr. Shaw's appointment to the formal leadership was the beginning of another: but he was regarded merely as a makeshift. One distinguished Ulster Liberal said, "If I had to make a choice between Mr. Shaw and Mr. Parnell, which thank Heaven I have not to do, I should prefer Mr. Parnell."

CHAPTER XIX

1879—1880

Formation of the Land League—Rent Raising in Ulster—Mr. Parnell and the Land League—Lord Hartington declares that the Agricultural System in both Great Britain and Ireland was Breaking Down—Mr. Gladstone's Midlothian Speeches—An Election in Donegal—Mr. Gladstone's Consistency—The Land Agitation in Ulster—Mr. Bright's Letter—A Relief of Distress Act—Mr. James Lowther as Irish Chief Secretary—The General Election of 1880 as it was in Ulster—Election Petition in Down—Was the Ballot Secret?

WHEN Parliament was prorogued in the August of 1879 a cry of distress was being raised in the West of Ireland. There were signs of a bad harvest. The potato crop was again failing. That there was again an Irish famine, such as had appalled the world thirty-three years before, was not true. But the distress was undoubtedly serious. During the spring and the early summer Mr. Michael Davitt, who had been released from a prison with a ticket-of-leave, had turned his attention to the land question. He and some of his friends—Mr. Brennan and Mr. O'Connor Power—began to hold meetings, from which the Land League emerged.

It was a new departure, made as it was when the struggle between the moderate Home Rulers, under Mr. Shaw, and the obstructive Parnellites had virtually ceased, as is usual in Ireland, by the victory of the extreme party. It appealed to the sordid instincts of the Irish tenant farmers, many of whom cared little for political reforms, and had taken little interest in the Home Rule agitation.

This summer the agrarian agitation was stimulated, as distinct from the one which Mr. Butt represented, and his successor, Mr. Shaw, at this time continued to represent.

Even in Ulster, where the tenant farmers were generally opposed to Home Rule, there had been, as we have seen, for several years meetings pointing out the defects in the Land Act of 1870. This was a great measure, on which, as has already been said, Parliament, according to Mr. Gladstone himself, had spent more time than on any other during his long experience. Being, however, avowedly an experiment, it was only in its practical working that its defects began to be plainly seen. Though the Ulster custom had been legally recognised, and an effort had been made to provide securities against eviction by giving compensation for disturbance to the smaller farmers on a graduated scale, there was, it may be repeated, no provision to prevent a systematic raising of the rents. This fact had been painfully felt in Ulster. The complaint there against this rent raising was loud. Thus, it was said, notwithstanding that the Ulster custom is now professedly recognised by law, it can be

[illegible] destroyed. Then the tribunals selected to decide disputes between the landlords and the tenants were the County Courts. It was asserted that the County Court judges were nominees of the landlords, generally in intimate communication with them, and that few of them indeed had any sympathy with the tenants. While such complaints were [illegible] raised even in the most loyal and prosperous parts of the province, the bad harvest, which was to be followed by another of those agricultural failures, strongly encouraged this agrarian agitation. The Land Act, though well-intentioned, was unable to bear this strain. The demand for its reform became general and threatened to unite North and South. What was regarded as the sentimental demand for Home Rule was now united with the very material demand for a reduction of rents. Hence the Land League originated, and in the autumn of this year 1879 came forth into vigorous life.

Mr. Parnell was not one of the authors of the League. He did not at the first heartily approve of it, and did not show any disposition to thoroughly identify himself with its action. But he soon began to see that it could be made a formidable instrument in promoting the cause of Home Rule. He had already declared that it would be impossible to limit the aspirations for Irish nationality. He subsequently at Cork repeated in almost similar language that declaration. With much candour he emphatically said that he would not take off his coat in

the cause of the agriculturalists, were it not to use them for Home Rule objects. Those words sent a shudder through the Protestant tenant farmers, who were hesitating as to the course they should pursue, when thus exposed to the temptations of the Land League.

Mr. Parnell began to advocate the reductions of rents in a very summary manner. Having taken off his coat in the cause of the tenants, he never again put it on. He again and again repeated the words "Knocking off rents," and at last committed himself to the principle that all the landlords were entitled to was the prairie value of the soil.

Some of the Irish landlords did recognise the prevailing distress. One excellent gentleman reduced his rents by the half. Many of them, however, as it is just to admit, were themselves comparatively poor, and had to find money to pay large encumbrances. This fact was not then, and perhaps is not now, so fully recognised as it ought to be. It was, however, noticed with some heartburning in Ulster that the reductions of rent then voluntarily given by the landlords were less than in some other parts of Ireland.

Lord Hartington had stated in the last session, on the motion of Mr. Chaplin, that the agricultural system in both Great Britain and Ireland was breaking down. This language, as Lord Beaconsfield declared at the dinner in the Mansion House before the prorogation of Parliament, had quite taken his breath away. But it was very plain to those who watched

events, even in what was called loyal Ulster, that the land question in Ireland would have again to be considered by the Government and the Legislature.

That time was approaching. Since his visit to Ireland, the late leader of the Opposition, as Mr. Gladstone was called, had continued to deliver speeches both in and out of the House of Commons on current events, and especially on the foreign policy of the Government. It was evident that he had no intention of keeping to his resolution of retirement as announced four years before in his letter to Lord Granville.

It had been for some time stated that he would at the next general election contest Midlothian. The report was, however, contradicted. It was said that he might seek an Irish seat, and the county of Antrim was mentioned as likely to have the opportunity of conferring this honour on the author of the Land Act. The news caused much excitement. There was joy among the independent tenant farmers; but from another quarter were heard some ominous mutterings. A letter soon afterwards appeared, stating positively that the eminent statesman had decided on contesting Midlothian against the Earl of Dalkeith, and that he would address in November those whom he hoped to represent in the next Parliament.

Mr. Gladstone, as is very well known, carried out his intention. He delivered a series of speeches which are now historical, and which constitute a most elaborate indictment of the whole policy of the

Government. It was remarked, however, by an intelligent Ulster farmer, who was striving to resist the seductions of the Land League: "Mr. Gladstone says nou't about Ireland."

The observation was just. The speeches Mr. Gladstone delivered during what was then called his Midlothian campaign were of a most detailed and comprehensive character. They embraced almost every political subject which he then thought to occupy the public mind. With a dissolution believed to be imminent, he was, through the electors of Midlothian, appealing to the electors of the whole United Kingdom, and even, according to the words he afterwards so often used, the civilised world. He delivered on one subject or another some twenty speeches during the fortnight over which this political tour extended. He said a great deal about foreign policy, the Andrassy Note of 1875, the Berlin Memorandum of the following year, the position of the Liberal party, the abolition of purchase in the army, the Fiji Islands, the Protectorate of Egypt, Afghanistan, finance, the Liquor Laws, the Land Laws, the horrors of war, the designs of Russia, the Balkan Principalities, Asia Minor, the defence of the Armenian Frontier, the Anglo-Turkish Convention, India, and the annexation of the Transvaal. But on Ireland, in those published speeches which occupy a large volume, only passing words were uttered. He spoke a few sentences about giving some kind of local government to Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and even portions of England, in order that certain

questions affecting the different parts of the United Kingdom might be dealt with more efficiently than they were. Parliament, he said, was overweighted, but nothing ought to be done to weaken or compromise its authority. This was all that Mr. Gladstone said about Ireland, and it was contained in about a paragraph and a half in one of the series of long addresses.

Read as those speeches may be now, with full knowledge of what was soon to occur, this great omission from this enormous programme of reform, three months before the spring of 1880, may produce a sense of bewilderment.

The Land League had begun its work. The Government had entered on prosecutions of agitators who were setting the law at defiance. Meetings of a most alarming character were being held in the South of Ireland. Even in Liverpool, at the time Mr. Gladstone was speaking in Midlothian, Mr. Parnell was using the most defiant language. It was plain to all who watched the progress of events that a great crisis in Irish affairs was approaching, and that the law was to be deliberately defied. But all that Mr. Gladstone could say about Ireland was that some sort of local government might be devised for the three kingdoms to render Parliament more efficient, and again that the blowing down of the Clerkenwell prison wall had, with serious injury to many poor and inoffensive people, and the murder of a policeman in the execution of his duty, revived an interest in Irish questions and assisted him to disestablish the Irish State

Church. The last reference, at the time when the Land League had begun its work, greatly perplexed and dismayed some of his most faithful followers in Ulster. They confessed that they could not understand it; that if it had any meaning at all it was a public encouragement to outrage and murder; that if it had any meaning at all it was an incitement to anarchy.

Five years afterwards Mr. Gladstone himself admitted that, while speaking with so much authority as a statesman in Midlothian, he knew very little at that time of the state of Ireland. He confessed his ignorance. He said before the same constituents, who had become his own, "I frankly admit that I had much upon my hands connected with the doings of that Government in almost every quarter of the world, and I did not know—no one knew—the severity of the crisis that was already swelling upon the horizon, and that shortly afterwards rushed upon us like a flood."[1] Mr. Gladstone sought to excuse this want of knowledge by the assertion that the Government then in power had not given all the information they might have done. But it was during the recess, late in November and early in December, that he made his great speeches in Midlothian. Parliament was not sitting; but the deficiency in the harvest, the formation of the Land League, and the violent language used were familiar to all readers of newspapers. The fact is that Mr. Gladstone, with so many high intellectual endow-

[1] *Times*, September 2nd, 1884.

ments, is for a statesman in the first rank singularly deficient in statesmanlike foresight, or what Lord Beaconsfield called prescience. Events seem generally to take him by surprise. His conversions appear always sudden. Hence that long succession of changes which, with all his mental accomplishments, prove him to be the most inconsistent statesman who ever lived.

Writing of himself in the third person, when he was accused of inconsistency in condemning the spirit in which the French Revolution was being conducted, Burke said, "If he could venture to value himself upon anything, it was on the virtue of consistency that he would value himself the most. Strip him of this, and you leave him naked indeed."[1] Tried by this test, Mr. Gladstone's political life affords a strange phenomenon, all the more remarkable because it is believed to have been animated by the utmost moral earnestness. Tried by this test, which Burke thought of so much importance, Mr. Gladstone is left naked indeed. Not long ago the illustrious veteran candidly stated that it was very difficult to preserve even a tolerably apparent consistency. But though circumstances change, principles do not.

Before Mr. Gladstone left Edinburgh he did show some interest in a contested election then going on in remote Donegal. There had been another vacancy in the Parliamentary representation of Ulster, caused by a death. This was of Mr. Wilson, a solicitor of

[1] Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs.

Raphoe, who three years before had been selected by the Conservatives to contest the county after the retirement of the popular Thomas Conolly: the "Tom Conolly," who, as has been said, succeeded his father in the representation of the county twenty-eight years before. The father and son had in fact been in succession members of Parliament for Donegal ever since the time of the first Reform Bill. That the Conservatives were driven to select a Presbyterian solicitor as their candidate in 1876, showed very plainly the effect which had been produced by the Ulster Liberal victories at the last general election. He defeated Mr. Lea, who had sat for Kidderminster, but even on his return to his home in Raphoe, when met by his friends and neighbours, he startled his Conservative supporters by declaring himself in favour of what was so precious to the Ulster farmer, the right of free sale.

Mr. Lea, on Mr. Wilson's death, again came forward to contest the constituency. On the 1st of December, while he was still in Edinburgh, Mr. Gladstone wrote expressing the warmest approval of Mr. Lea's candidature. The letter was published, and gave great encouragement to the Liberals in the county. He wrote: "Need I say that I heartily desire the return of Mr. Lea for Donegal?" He authorised his correspondent to let the fact be known to all whom it might influence. Mr. Lea was returned by a large majority over Mr. David L. M'Corkell, a young and rising barrister, the son of the respected merchant in the city of Derry. Land-

lords were no longer the favourite candidates even from the Conservative point of view in many Ulster counties. A social and a political revolution concurrently went on.

The distress seemed to grow in intensity. While Mr. Gladstone's eyes, according to his own statement, were turned far away from Ireland, and also according to his own subsequent confession ranged over the whole civilised and uncivilised world, even the Duchess of Marlborough, the wife of the Lord Lieutenant, published a letter in the *Times* appealing for aid. Meetings for this charitable object were held in London and in the principal British and Irish towns. The Duchess of Marlborough's Fund was widely advertised. Belfast subscribed liberally.

At the same time, the Government were carrying on prosecutions against prominent Land Leaguers, including Mr. Michael Davitt. Just as the year was closing, Mr. Gladstone wrote another letter on Irish affairs, from which his attention was turned. It was in reply to a Home Rule correspondent, Mr. John Ferguson of Glasgow, who asked him to explain what he had said about the Clerkenwell explosion and the Manchester murder, and to show how, when the next general election occurred, and it was approaching, the Home Rulers could be expected to support the Liberal party. Mr. Gladstone said little on the first interrogatory except that it was the people and not he who had been influenced by those crimes to take an

interest in the Irish question, and to the other he replied that the Home Rulers could do no more mischief to the Liberal party than they had previously done. Mr. Ferguson, as a Home Ruler, was well known in Ulster. The correspondence was there much commented upon and widely circulated.

As the eventful year 1880 began, the difficulties which had been only partly overcome in Afghanistan seriously agitated the public mind. There was some excuse for ordinary people, not being statesmen, thinking little of Ireland. But General Roberts, who had for a time been shut up in his cantonments at Cabul by the Afghans, and had been thrown on his own resources, was an Irishman. The Conservatives generally regarded him as a hero, but for him the Irish Nationalists as usual had only depreciatory language. The earnest Ulster Liberals, and especially the Presbyterians, had indeed no admiration for the aggressive Imperial policy the Government had pursued during the last three years. One of the ablest of their body, when asked at a public meeting if he concurred in this policy, replied emphatically, "I dare not."

Parliament was summoned to reassemble on the 5th of February. It was not expected that the Government would suddenly have recourse to a dissolution. That event was not anticipated when early in January another letter from Mr. Gladstone to a gentleman in Belfast was published, stating that though he could

depend on him giving attention to any plan whi might seem to be advantageous with reference to t land of Ireland, "I do not, however," he added, " at present advised, see the character of practicabili in any design based on expropriating with compens tion the present landed proprietors." It is evide that Mr. Gladstone still did not foresee that t Land League was becoming very formidable, a that the first great measure of his administratio soon to be formed, would be a new Irish Land Ac with new machinery, and an enlarged system of la purchase with the money of the State.

The land war was progressing. At Carra, i Connemara, where the people appeared to be star ing, there had been a serious collision with th police as ejectments were being served. In all th newspapers there were daily accounts with th standing headings, "The Distress in Ireland" an "Land Meetings." The clergy of all the Iris Churches were appealing to their congregations t contribute to the relief of the admitted distress. I the last week of January a large and representativ meeting of Ulster Liberal tenant farmers and the advocates was held at Ballymoney, in the county Antrim, the very centre, as has been stated, of th land agitation on constitutional and not on Lan League grounds. The application of the Churc Surplus to the relief of the distress, the improvemen and extension of the Bright Clauses for carrying out system of purchase, and the establishment of a tribuna in which the tenant farmers might have confidenc

not only as was said for raising but also for reducing rents, were very strongly recommended. It may be stated, indeed, that in the resolutions and speeches the Land Act of the following year was very distinctly sketched out. In a letter read at the meeting Mr. Bright said: "There can be no settlement of the question and no real peace so long as 600,000 occupying tenants, of whom 500,000 are tenants at will, are in the hands of 10,000 to 12,000 owners of land, and I know no remedy except by enabling tenants to become owners, and to have a fixed and permanent interest in the soil. This is the great thing to be done: without it, nothing is done." A few days after this letter was read at the Ballymoney meeting in Antrim, Mr. Bright delivered a speech in a similar spirit to his constituents at Birmingham on the Irish land question. His attention at least had not been taken away from Ireland just before the appeal to the constituencies, and the formation of a Government with Mr. Gladstone at its head, to be engaged almost exclusively in dealing with Irish affairs.

Parliament met, as had been announced, on the 5th of February. The measures mentioned in the Queen's Speech were few; the programme of legislation appeared to be not seriously intended. The Irish question became the most important one; all others seemed to be insignificant. It was rumoured that the Government would appeal to the country against the Home Rule obstructionists. But a Bill for the relief of Irish distress was announced, giving power to local guardians, with the

consent of the Local Government Board, to borrow money, and also to landlords with the same object. As soon as the measure appeared it was condemned, as professing to lend landlords more than a million of money for two years without interest, and afterwards to charge them one per cent. It was asked indignantly, Could this properly be called a Relief of Distress Act? The heart of the ministers appeared not to be in their work. Mr. James Lowther, with good intentions, was not, as the Irish Chief Secretary, an element of strength to the Government. He had continued to condemn the Irish Land Act of 1870 as confiscation, and did not foresee that future Governments, Conservative not less than Liberal—and indeed even more—would continue to advance on the same path. Early in March it was announced that the Government would dissolve the Parliament as soon as temporary provision could be made for the inevitable demands of the public service. One of the reasons given for this apparently sudden decision was an election for Liverpool, when, the day after the meeting of the two Houses for the session, Mr. Whitley, the Conservative member, had been returned over the Liberal, Lord Ramsay, by 2,221 votes, and a still more recent election for Southwark, in which the Conservative defeated both a Liberal and a Labour candidate.

The result of this appeal to the constituencies is well known. Mr. Gladstone and many of his supporters have always referred to the contest as a great

triumph. A great personal triumph of Mr. Gladstone it undoubtedly was; but with all due respect to the Eighty Club and other memorials of that success, it must be acknowledged that the issue was not taken by Mr. Gladstone himself, or by his principal colleagues, on an Irish policy. Ireland was by him and by most of his British supporters left in the background.

This reproach cannot, however, be made to the Ulster Liberals. By the very necessities of their position, they had especially to keep the Irish land question in the front, and not less to condemn the Land League and the Irish Nationalist obstructionists. Here it is not necessary to dwell on the great Liberal victories in England, which gave Mr. Gladstone his subsequent working majority for a time over both Nationalists and Conservatives. In Ulster, however, the general election was memorable as being the last one in which the Catholics were mostly united with the Protestant Liberals. This was indeed not the case in all the contests; but it was in many. In Belfast an excellent Liberal and most kindly gentleman, Mr. John Shaw Brown, was with a Liberal Conservative, Dr. Seeds, defeated by the old members, Mr. Ewart and Mr. Corry. But the Liberal vote was a thousand more than it had been at the general election of 1874, and the ordinary party Conservative vote not so large as it then was. Yet the contests in Ulster began with the loss of three seats for small boroughs won by the Liberals at the former election. These were Carrickfergus, Coleraine, and Newry, two of which have since been disfran-

chised. It was a remarkable fact that in those small Ulster boroughs the Liberals were victorious when the tide went so strongly against them in England, and that, when the tide was coming in with full volume on the Liberal side in the sister island, in Ulster those three losses should almost simultaneously have been sustained.

Social influences more than a change in political convictions had a great deal to do with the somewhat unexpected defeats. In Newry, however, a number of Catholics voted against the "Liberal," but not the then Nationalist Catholic, Mr. Carvill. Mr. Thomas A. Dickson was again returned for Dungannon, but on being unseated through a petition, his son James, afterwards called the youngest member of the House of Commons, was substituted in his place. Mr. Litton, also a candidate of Mr. Dickson, as he himself announced by placard, was returned in County Tyrone over Lord Claud Hamilton. In Donegal Mr. Thomas Lea, the Liberal member elected in December, was again returned with a Liberal colleague, the Rev. Dr. Kinnear, a Presbyterian clergyman of Letterkenny, associated for many years with the tenant-right movement, as so many Ulster Presbyterian clergymen have been. Mr. Hugh Law and Sir Thomas M'Clure were again returned for the county of Londonderry by large majorities. But the Conservative Mr. C. E. Lewis also retained his seat for the Maiden City, it was said through certain Nationalists under the instigation of their old candidate, Mr. Joseph Biggar. Two seats were won

by the Ulster Liberals in the county of Monaghan. one by Mr. Findlater, the nephew of the Liberal Presbyterian gentleman who built a handsome church in Dublin, and the other by a local solicitor, Mr. Givan. Another seat was won by the Liberals in the county of Armagh, where Mr. James N. Richardson, a member of the Society of Friends, and the son of the proprietor of the village of Bessbrook, in which there is not a public-house, was at the head of the poll.

From an Ulster Liberal point of view, the victories coming after the three small borough defeats were very gratifying. They showed what a great change continued to be worked in the representation by the Land Act and the Ballot Act. Throughout all Ulster Mr. Gladstone's name had become a tower of strength. Among the Ulster Liberals he was everywhere regarded with admiration, gratitude, and confidence.

The two contests of Antrim and Down excited the greatest interest. Just before the dissolution a clever Conservative agent published a letter stating that the ballot was not secret, and that he was ready to communicate his discovery to all whom it concerned. The letter and other communications from the same source to electioneering agents and others, made with all the confidence of Archimedes with his well-known Eureka! raised a controversy and caused much indignation among the Ulster Liberals. Mr. W. E. Forster, who was regarded as the author of the Ballot Act, was appealed to, and he gave the originator of this alleged discovery a significant warning as to the

consequences likely to be incurred by those who attempted to carry the finding from theory into practice. But the principal letter in which the ballot was stated not to be secret was, in anticipation of the elections, extensively circulated among the tenant farmers of Antrim and Down. It was believed to have produced considerable effect in those constituencies, which had appeared to be becoming more and more independent.

In the county of Antrim the Conservative candidates were Mr. Chaine and Mr. Macnaghten. Mr. Chaine had sat for the county during the last Parliament and was personally very popular. He had purchased a considerable amount of land in the neighbourhood of Larne, and had thus become virtually the proprietor of Larne Harbour, which he was sparing no efforts to develop. He might be called like Yorick, "a fellow of infinite jest and of most excellent fancy;" but he could on occasions be sufficiently serious. Mr. Macnaghten, now Lord Macnaghten, the second Conservative candidate, was an able lawyer, devoted to chamber practice, but he was very little known even in his native county, and when his address first appeared it was thought that it had come from his brother, Sir Francis. One of the Liberal candidates was again Mr. Charles Wilson, brother of Sir Samuel. The two brothers were Presbyterians, and, as has been said, born in the county of Antrim, but were principally known as having acquired large fortunes in Australia. The second Liberal candidate was Mr. Samuel Black, of Randals-

town, both a merchant and a tenant farmer, and distinguished by his practical knowledge of the land question from a tenant farmer's point of view. Two better Liberal candidates for such a constituency could scarcely have been found; but while they polled very large votes they were defeated. The result, though not a success to the Liberal cause, showed what a great change had come over the constituency since Sir Shafto Adair, the then Lord Waveney, had, as a Liberal and tenant farmers' candidate, been beaten by more than two to one.

In Down the Liberals had only one candidate, Major Crawford, the eldest brother of the late member. The major, not being a rich man, made it a condition that his electioneering expenses should be strictly limited. The conducting agent was thus crippled, while his two opponents, Lord Castlereagh, who had been previously returned, and Lord Arthur Hill, brother of the late Marquis of Downshire and uncle of the present, had—Sir Henry James's Act not having yet passed—an overflowing exchequer at their command. As soon as the contest began, and before Parliament was dissolved, a controversy arose both in the House of Commons and in the country as to how far Lord Catlereagh had at the last election given promises to the leaders of the Home Rule Association to remain neutral on the question. Mr. Biggar asserted that a positive promise had been given. Even the Marquis of Hartington, as leader of the Opposition, called attention to the subject. It appeared that Lord Castlereagh had seen a Dr. Quinn and others, who

were leaders in the Ulster Home Rule Association: but he stated that he did not know them to be officers of the Society. On this question, which excited so much interest at the time, it is not necessary to dwell. The present Marquis of Londonderry is, as is very well known, a thoroughgoing Unionist, but he would himself admit that both at his first and second election for the county of Down he did not give a pledge against Home Rule. Even after this second contest he was stated in *Dod's Parliamentary Companion* to be "a Conservative, not pledged on the Home Rule question."

Major Crawford, the Liberal candidate, was defeated. He was, however, only twenty votes behind Lord Castlereagh. The respective numbers polled for the three candidates were: 5,873 for Lord Arthur Hill, 5,599 for Lord Castlereagh, and 5,579 for Major Crawford.

It was felt by the Liberals of County Down that they had not been fairly defeated. A petition was presented against the validity of Lord Castlereagh's return. The trial occupied some five days in the Court House at Downpatrick. The two presiding judges were the veteran Baron Fitzgerald, called familiarly "The Baron," who had tried the election petition against Mr. M'Clure's return for Belfast eleven years before, and a popular Catholic judge, well known in Ulster, Mr. Justice Barry. The question whether an electioneering agent, just before a general election, was justified in attempting to shake the confidence of the electors in the secrecy of the ballot was deliberately raised. Mr. Justice Barry

delivered a judgment strongly in favour of the petition; but Baron Fitzgerald, on apparently metaphysical grounds, declined to take the same course. He admitted that Lord Castlereagh's majority was very small; but he held it not to be proved before him that any number of electors had been induced to vote against their convictions through the allegation that the ballot was not secret. The answer was obvious. The fear of the want of secrecy in the ballot which would induce an elector to vote in favour of his landlord or his landlord's candidate would also prevent him from getting into the witness-box to swear that through this alleged want of secrecy he had voted against his convictions. This, however, that excellent judge, Baron Fitzgerald, could not see. One of the reasons which appeared to influence him was a dislike of the nominal petitioner, Blakeney Macartney, a person in very humble life, a carman of Newtownards. The selection of such a man for the presentation of the petition appeared to the Baron to discredit it. A great deal was said about this Blakeney Macartney. When the petition failed through the disagreement of the judges, a gentleman connected with it was asked by one of his work-people: "If Lord Castlereagh had been unseated on Blakeney Macartney's petition, would Blakeney Macartney have claimed the seat?" The idea was ludicrous; but the question was honestly put.

The promoters of the petition had, however, succeeded in one of their most important objects. Attempts to shake the confidence of electors in the

secrecy of the ballot had been not equivocally condemned by both judges. The Act, which had been limited to eight years, in the subsequent session was renewed, and is now permanently on the Statute Book. The ballot is undoubtedly secret in its operation with respect to voters who can sign their names. No landlords in Ulster now dream of attempting to influence their tenants to vote with them through the assumption that the ballot is not secret. Unfortunately, however, we see another and less easily remediable state of things. The illiterate voter has been, and continues to be, the weak point in the Ballot Act, and especially in Ireland. Those illiterate voters, or they who declare themselves to be such, are for the most part Catholics and Nationalists. They are brought up to the poll by the priests as carefully as they had formerly been by agents and bailiffs of their landlords. The situation is reversed. All attempts on the part of landlords to interfere with the secrecy of the ballot, or to induce a belief that it is not secret, have long ago been abandoned. But that the secrecy of the ballot is violated in the case of the illiterate voters, and principally for Irish Nationalist objects when promoted by the clergy, is an evil now generally acknowledged by those who are thoroughly familiar with elections in some of the Ulster counties, and also further south.

On the results of those Ulster elections, in a reply to a letter I sent to him, Mr. Gladstone wrote on the 1st April, 1880: "There is something in the politics of Belfast which it is difficult for a stranger to

comprehend clearly. But the North of Ireland generally has been eminent, even amidst the disasters of 1874, for its adherence to Liberal principles, and I rejoice in the present results. However, the Liberal party has now to undergo a severer moral trial than it has ever had before." Yes, the Liberal party, at least after the following general election not then foreseen, had to undergo a severer moral trial than it had ever had before, and so had its great leader himself. It will be observed that at this time Mr. Gladstone was all gratitude to the Ulster Liberals, most of whom under that moral trial were to remain true to the Unionist principles they, with Mr. Gladstone himself as he thus wrote, professed.

CHAPTER XX

1880–1881

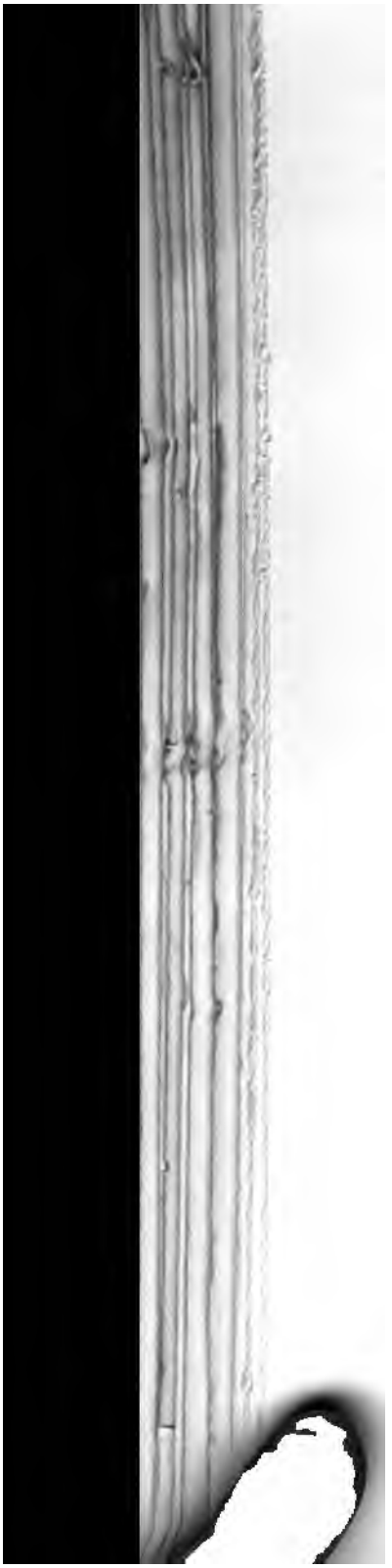
Sir Charles Russell—Lord O'Hagan—Mr. W. E. Forster—The Renewal of the Peace Preservation Act—The Rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill—"Buckshot Forster"—Lord O'Hagan at Havre—Mr. Parnell and the Commission on the Relief of Distress—Treatment of Mr. Forster by Mr. Parnell and the Nationalists—His Letter to the Ulster Liberals—Mr. Parnell's Championship of the Land League—The Session of 1881—The New Land Bill—The Gratitude of the Ulster Tenant Farmers.

NOTWITHSTANDING the loss of the three borough seats at the beginning of the general election in 1880, the Ulster Liberals had improved their position. Their returns showed a net gain of two seats, or eight Ulster seats in all. This was a great change since the country was appealed to on the Irish Church question. It portended other changes. Mr. Benjamin Whitworth, too, a manufacturer of Manchester, had also been returned for Drogheda, where he had established industries. The distinguished Irish Catholic lawyer, Mr. Charles Russell, was returned as a Liberal over the professed Nationalist, Mr. Philip Callan, for Dundalk, which he had unsuccessfully contested against the same gentleman at the former general

election. Those elections, though outside Ulster, were from their vicinity almost regarded as Ulster Liberal victories.

With the expectation that the new Government would remedy the defects in his Land Act of 1870, Mr. Gladstone's return to office as Prime Minister was regarded with much satisfaction by the Ulster Liberals of the agricultural constituencies. There were rumours that Mr. Hugh Law would be the Irish Lord Chancellor. But Lord O'Hagan's many friends were not sorry that he again resumed the high judicial office in which he had been so unbecomingly assailed by the Lord Justice Christian. That judge had now retired. Had it been otherwise it is probable that Lord O'Hagan would not have returned to the Chancellorship. He made no secret that the arrangement was but temporary; that as soon as the new Government could dispense with the services of Mr. Law as the Irish Attorney-General he would receive the office for which he was admitted to be admirably qualified.

Not until May was far advanced was Mr. Gladstone's second administration ready to meet the new House of Commons, in which they had a very decided majority. The new elections were of course to be gone through and the new measures to be settled. When a friend whom he had been in the habit of consulting on Irish matters was on his usual May visit to London, Lord O'Hagan suggested that he should see the new Irish Chief Secretary, Mr. W. E. Forster.



The reply was, "I have not th
Forster's acquaintance."

"Ah! but you can soon know hi
you a letter of introduction."

The letter was at once written.
sealed it was read to the object
very complimentary terms. The fo
it was presented to the new Chief S
it could be delivered there was, how
Earl Cowper, the new Lord Lieut
Mr. Forster. His carriage, with the
men in what appeared to be new gre
before the door of the Irish Office
Street, Westminster. There seemed
an unaccustomed brightness. There
thing an air of hope, of hope whic
months was to be disappointed.

Mr. Forster, as he sat in his ch
what rough and uncouth. His cloth
to fit him; they hung about him an
of being bought ready-made. Whe
letter in such complimentary term
the new Irish Chief Secretary, he re
and then threw it unceremoniously
paper basket. He gave something
then remarked, "The people in Be
badly, they do."

"How?"

Another growl. "Oh, riots!"

"Mr. Forster, you will perhaps e
ing that you will not be long Irish

without finding Belfast not the worst town in Ireland to govern."

"I wish I could think so."

"You will think so."

Another growl. "What do you think about renewing the Peace Preservation Act, which expires next month?"

"It can scarcely be said to affect Ulster, certainly not the loyal parts of Ulster; they do not require it. But in my humble opinion it would place the new Liberal Government in a somewhat invidious light if, after such a success at the polls, they were to begin their legislative work by passing what would be represented as a new Coercion Act."

"Parts of it might be renewed."

"I should be disposed to place Ireland on her good behaviour."

Another growl. "There is a strong No Popery feeling among the Ulster Presbyterians; is there not?"

"Among some of them; but not among all. The Ulster Liberal successes at the late elections were gained by Presbyterians acting with the Catholics."

"What do they think about Lord Ripon as a Roman Catholic being appointed Governor-General of India?"

"They do not think about it at all. I have not seen a complaint made against it, even in the Conservative and Orange newspapers."

Thus this interview ended. During its progress Mr. Forster gradually became very cordial. A better

meaning public man never took the office of Irish Chief Secretary. He was, too, one of the ablest; but he had one defect, which may appear even in this sketch of his conversation. He looked at questions from within and not from without, from what is called the subjective and not the objective point of view. He appeared habitually to be examining political information according to his own preconceived ideas. An open mind such as Mr. Gladstone keeps may be carried to excess and render its possessor liable to the reproach of the Duke in *Twelfth Night* about women generally of lacking retention. Statesmen ought indeed to be ready to learn from those with whom they are brought into communication, just as Dr. Johnson was always ready to listen to any man talking of his trade. Yet something ought to be retained and permanently retained, to be retained indeed while life lasts.

Differing apparently from Mr. Forster, Lord O'Hagan was of opinion that it would be better not to renew the Peace Preservation Act. There were, it was rumoured, differences of opinion on the subject in the new Cabinet; but when Parliament met for business on the 20th of May, it was announced that the measure was not to be renewed. Ireland was to be placed on her good behaviour. How the Nationalists behaved will soon be seen.

The session became very much an Irish one. As, however, has already been said, and as Mr. Gladstone himself confessed, he did not foresee such a

result. Hence there was not an Irish measure announced in the Queen's Speech. The statement that the Peace Preservation Act would not be renewed was unequivocal, and it was added that if the provisions for the relief of distress passed in the late Session were not found to be adequate for dealing with the emergency they would be supplemented by others already under consideration. This, however, was all. The provisions for the relief of distress had to be supplemented. They were represented as really for the relief of the landlords, and not of the tenants. It was said that the money under the measure of the late Government, lent to the landlords, after two years of no payment, at 1 per cent., had been obtained and invested by them at 4 per cent. This at least was the statement again and again made: whether true or not, it had a great effect in Ulster, where the relief was not, however, much if at all required.

Three important Irish measures were rejected by the Lords. These were the Cost of Evictions Bill, the Registration of Irish Voters Bill, and the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. The last measure occupied much of the time of the Upper House. Lord Cairns and his supporters seemed to take a real pleasure in thus defying the new Government and the large majority at its command in the House of Commons. They were bent on showing Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues that they were not omnipotent. Lord O'Hagan's earnest and eloquent pleading for the tenants was declared to be sentimental, and his

representations were somewhat contemptuously disregarded. As a fact, more than what the Compensation for Disturbance Bill gave had afterwards to be granted by a Conservative Government.

It must with regret be admitted that by the rejection of the Compensation for Disturbance Bill the large majority of the Peers undoubtedly played into Mr. Parnell's hands. He took credit for having been the first to recommend the introduction of such a measure. When it was thrown out he posed as a far-sighted Irish patriot. The Registration of Irish Voters Bill was also quickly passed through the House of Commons, sent up to the Lords before the session ended and rejected, in order to show how resolute the Peers could be in opposing the Government and the majority of the House of Commons.

Mr. Forster, the Irish Chief Secretary, already found the responsibility of his office far more weighty than he had ever anticipated. The Nationalists attacked him, and were beginning to call him "Buckshot Forster." He afterwards explained that he had nothing to do with the regulations of the police respecting the use of buckshot when the order was given to fire on rioters, and that this order was really intended to be humane. But he received no credit for this statement. "Buckshot Forster!" "Buckshot Forster!" resounded through the South and West of Ireland. In the North it was scarcely heard at all. The gentleman who had been introduced by Lord O'Hagan to the Irish Chief Secretary

paid him another visit at this time in passing through Dublin. He could not help saying, "Well, Mr. Forster, what do you think of Belfast now?" The question was met with another and deeper growl.

The same gentleman, on his holiday, met Lord O'Hagan at Havre. Parliament had been prorogued early in September, but it had to the last been doubtful whether a new Peace Preservation Act might not have to be carried. Mr. Forster had intimated as much in one of his last speeches before the autumn recess. He stated, and all his colleagues concurred with him in the announcement, that if necessary Parliament would later in the year be called together again to pass another stringent measure to restrain the agitation of the Land League, which was obviously bent on encouraging a strike against rents.

Lord O'Hagan, as he looked on the ships coming in and going out of the Seine, from the Hotel Frascati at Havre, was as uneasy as Mr. Forster had become. The Irish Lord Chancellor much regretted the action of the Lords in throwing out the Compensation for Disturbance Bill. "It has," he said, "made matters worse, and is a great mistake." There were reports of an attempt to blow up the Irish mail on its way to Holyhead, and of a great fire in Dublin. "I am afraid," the Lord Chancellor remarked, "I shall have to go over to Ireland; it is difficult to get a holiday."

Mr. Parnell and his followers were evidently bent on doing all they could to thwart the good intentions

of the Government. Mr. Gladstone and his colleagues received no credit, no thanks for not renewing the Peace Preservation Act. The Irish Nationalist leaders were evidently annoyed that they could not blame the Government for having passed another strong Coercion Act. It was distinctly announced by more than one of Mr. Parnell's colleagues that the Government should be forced to govern unconstitutionally. The Ministers could not in this their first session be blamed for coercion, but for the want of coercion. The Nationalists regretted that so far at least they were deprived of their best cry, "Coercion." It was obvious that Mr. Forster and Mr. Gladstone were not to receive fair play. They were in all they did to be spelt backwards. The Parnellites, as they began to call themselves, knew what they meant when they said, "We shall force the Ministry to govern unconstitutionally." The unconstitutional measures into which they declared they would force the Government were of course to be used as a reproach or as an excuse for still more defiant and lawless agitation.

The Government had issued a Commission to inquire into the facts of the distress in Ireland. Mr. Parnell in a speech at Ennis, delivered on the 19th of September of this year, 1880, advised the tenants not to give evidence before that Commission. "My opinion," he said then, "decidedly is that whatever harm you do to your cause by going before this Commission you certainly will be able to do no good." The tenants were exhorted not to depend upon any

Commission nor upon any Government. He asked what was to be done to a tenant who offered to take an evicted farm? He was met with cries, "Shoot him." Mr. Parnell declared that he had a much better, a much more Christian and charitable way. He then gave his notion of what was a much better, a more Christian and charitable way. It was to make the man as miserable as possible by systematic combination, to produce complete isolation in the streets, in the shops, on the fair-green, in the market-place, and in the chapel; "to treat him as a leper of old, in order to show thorough detestation of the crime he had committed."[1]

In considering the Christianity and charity of Mr. Parnell's advice to the tenants it must be remembered that he was only using the land agitation as a means to carry out Irish Nationalisation, that the condition of the tenant farmers was with him not the first but only the second consideration, and that, as he repeated at this very time, he used the one to accomplish the other. In the speech here quoted he advised the tenants to keep a firm grip on their homesteads. In a speech delivered at Galway in little more than a month afterwards he once more plainly said: "Large and important as is the class of tenant farmers, constituting as they do with their wives and families the majority of the people of this country, I would not have taken off my coat and gone to work if I had not known that we

[1] See the speech in the *Freeman's Journal*, September 20th, 1880.

were laying the foundation for the restoration of our legislative independence."

As a natural consequence of this violent agitation, which was intentionally and avowedly stimulated to the highest point, evictions increased. A general system of intimidation prevailed through the South and West of Ireland. The policy, whatever may be pretended, and however much it may be sought to excuse it, was an atrocious one. It was contrary to all laws, human and divine.

Mr. Forster began to see how true it was that Belfast and the loyal parts of Ulster would not be the great difficulty of his administration. The Government were being appealed to by all the Conservative newspapers to enforce the law against the agitators. But from the Ulster Liberals Mr. Forster received as he deserved the utmost sympathy. At this very time, indeed, he was invited by some of these Liberals, with Mr. J. N. Richardson, the Liberal member of the county, to a public banquet in Armagh. He declined the compliment at the time, but hoped that he might accept it on a future occasion. His letter was pathetic. He found that he had indeed fallen on evil times and evil tongues. From Mr. Parnell and the Land Leaguers Mr. Forster received not the least consideration, and not the least pretence of justice.

It has been represented that Mr. Forster was eager to induce his colleagues to adopt a strong coercive policy. Mr. T. P. O'Connor represents him as influenced by either his terrors or ferocity. His letter

to the Ulster Liberals proves the contrary. He wrote: "As before, so now, it may become necessary to ask Parliament to enact special legislation, but I am confident that the Ulster Liberals will agree with me that neither the present Government, nor any Government, ought to ask Parliament to resort to exceptional legislation for Ireland until the resources have been exhausted of those constitutional powers which suffice for the good government of Great Britain."

The letter was, on its publication, much commented upon in Ulster. It had the hearty approval of the Liberals generally. Mr. Forster made a noble attempt to govern Ireland without having recourse to any extraordinary and exceptional powers. This it is but just to admit. But his letter, through Mr. J. N. Richardson, to the Ulster Liberals, showing that he was most anxious to avoid what would be represented as coercive legislation, only induced the leading men in the Land League to do what they could to compel him to take strong measures. No such agitation against landlords, and in favour of lawless combinations against peaceful and law-abiding people who only sought to use their individual freedom as citizens, had before been known in any civilised country. Though not, as has been said, the author of the Land League, Mr. Parnell saw more clearly every day what a tremendous instrument it could be made for frustrating all the good intentions of a great Liberal Government, and thus, as he professed to hope, if he did not really believe in it, extorting Irish Nationalist

independence. Falstaff said of Worcester at Shrewsbury: "Rebellion lay in his way, and he found it." The Land League lay in Mr. Parnell's way, and he found it. That the means he and his friends relentlessly employed were illegal, and such as no Government would tolerate, no person can pretend to deny. The ministers at last decided on prosecuting Mr. Parnell, Mr. Dillon, Mr. Biggar, Mr. Sexton, and several other prominent Land Leaguers. The information was filed by that Mr. Hugh Law, the Irish Attorney-General, and one of the Liberal members for the county of Londonderry, who was not more distinguished by his eminently judicial character than by his genuine sympathies with the Irish tenant farmers.

Mr. T. P. O'Connor had the candour to admit that the main charges were true. Tenants had been incited not to pay rents; some had been deterred from taking land from which others had been evicted; there was a conspiracy for injuring landlords; and combinations had been formed for carrying out these admittedly unlawful ends. The panegyrist of the Parnell movement and of his colleagues says: "There is scarcely one of these charges which was not the glory instead of the shame of Mr. Parnell and his traversers."[1] Mr. O'Connor thought that Mr. Parnell's justification was that he found a people face to face with famine and groaning under the oppression of centuries. There had been two bad harvests; but there was no famine. The next harvest was good, and the

[1] See *Parnell Movement*, p. 395.

people were certainly not then groaning under the oppression of centuries.

Though the lawlessness of Mr. Parnell and the other accused men could scarcely be disputed, the prosecution of course failed. This was almost certain from the first it would do; the jury disagreed and a verdict could not be returned.

Reports were in circulation that Mr. Forster had hurried over to London to insist on his colleagues preparing a Coercion Bill for the Parliament which was to meet on the 6th of January. Land League meetings were being held even in certain parts of Ulster; but they met with no great success. The newspaper which more prominently represented the Ulster Liberals put forth the most earnest efforts to keep the tenant farmers in the constitutional path of reform. Tenant right meetings of a thoroughly law-abiding and moderate character were also held, and it became known that a new Land Bill would early in the session of 1881 be introduced by the Government. Some extreme men said, "Yes, there will be a weak Land Bill and a strong Coercion Bill. You will see." But the Ulster tenant farmers generally had the fullest confidence in Mr. Forster, Mr. Gladstone, and their Government.

The Queen's Speech was very different from the one in which the former session of the new Parliament was opened. It could not be said that Mr. Gladstone had left Ireland out; it occupied more than half of the Royal Message. There had, it was said, been a diminution of distress, and an abundant

harvest; but agrarian crime had multiplied beyond all recent experience. A system of terrorism had been established, witnesses had been intimidated, and the exercise of private rights and the performance of public duties had been paralysed. On the very first night of the session Mr. Forster gave notice of the introduction of the new Coercion Bill for Ireland. It cost him a painful effort. The remarks he made on the subject were sad; but they of course only encouraged the leaders of the Land League, who were virtually carrying on the government in Ireland independently of the Queen, to the most determined efforts of obstruction. Mr. Michael Davitt's arrest stimulated Mr. Parnell and his followers to disregard all the recognised forms of Parliamentary discussion, and to do what they could by abusing the rules of debate to bring the House of Commons into contempt. On the long series of violent scenes it is not necessary here to dwell. In Ulster by Liberals as well as Conservatives they were regarded with amazement. The Liberals of the province only regretted that by such systematic obstruction the Irish Land Bill, which had also been announced in the Royal Speech, was delayed, and that there might be some difficulty in passing it against the covert hostility of the Irish Nationalist members and the avowed opposition of the Conservatives. Professing to be based on the Act of 1870, it practically conceded the three F's, which formed the tenant right watchword of Ulster: fair rent, free sale, and fixity of tenure.

Sir Stafford Northcote, then the leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons, denounced the three F's as Force, Fraud, and Folly. This alliteration gave great offence to the Ulster tenant farmers, and was classed with Lord Palmerston's old antithesis, that tenant right was landlord wrong. The principal feature of the Bill was, however, the Land Commission for fixing rents for a term of fifteen years. Great efforts were made by members connected with Ulster to induce Mr. Gladstone to consent to allow leaseholders to have the full benefits of the measure. But on this point he refused to yield. He would, he said, be no party to the breaking of contracts between landlords and tenants. The concession, with some others then opposed, was afterwards made by a Conservative Government. On Wednesday, the 30th of June, when the Land Bill was in Committee, Mr. Gladstone was thought to have taken up an uncompromising position in declaring that he could not allow the rents of existing leases to be revised. His declaration was at once challenged by Mr. Litton, the Liberal member for Tyrone, who was afterwards appointed one of the three principal Land Commissioners under the measure then before the House of Commons.

The next day the Prime Minister found his faithful Ulster Liberal followers sitting round him whom they regarded as their leader, the veteran Sir Thomas M'Clure, almost in revolt. When Mr. Gladstone saw their attitude, on glancing over his shoulder, a pleasant smile passed over his face and he

nudged Lord Hartington. It was evident to those who watched the play of his countenance that he to a certain extent at least, notwithstanding his uncompromising declaration of the preceding afternoon, was not indisposed to yield. He rose and stated that he adhered to his statement that a leaseholding tenant had no right to have his rent revised; but he said—and here he hesitated—he was quite prepared to admit that where a tenant considered that a lease had been unduly thrust upon him, it should be competent to the Court to quash the instrument. This was one of Mr. Gladstone's characteristic surrenders. It was made, however, to his friends the Ulster Liberal members, and gave some degree of satisfaction to the Ulster tenant farmers.

The Bill was not out of danger until the last days of the session. On the Lords' amendments, however, some compromise was come to, and the measure became law. Its passing was hailed with great satisfaction by the tenant farmers. While the Land Leaguers, with Mr. Parnell now taking the most prominent part, were redoubling the vehemence of their agitation, and declaring that the Act would utterly fail in its professed object, a feeling of gratitude was experienced throughout Ulster. One of the ablest and most indefatigable secretaries of the Ulster Tenant Right Associations wrote, "I confess that I never expected to get from any Parliament so good a measure. It does give us all honest and practical Ulster men have ever asked for. It does give us, in fact if not in form, the three F.'s."

This was at the time the general opinion. Never was Mr. Gladstone's name mentioned before with so much respect. The desire to pay him a personal compliment was general among the tenant farmers who supported the Ulster Liberal candidates. Huge bonfires were suggested to be set simultaneously on fire over all the hills of Ulster. It was said, however, that this would not be an adequate proof of respect and confidence. A public subscription to a testimonial was recommended. It was thought that this could be combined with a visit to Ulster, which it was hoped that the Prime Minister would pay. This was indeed the time when he could have visited Ulster most successfully. He was shortly afterwards consulted on this subject; but the visit was never paid. He excused himself from accepting this last invitation on the plea that, with his advancing age and laborious duties, he must limit his public appearances at political meetings to his own constituency of Midlothian. The fact, however, remains that while the Land League, with the whole Nationalist party, were denouncing the Prime Minister and his colleagues as coercionists, and doing everything they could to prejudice the people against the new Land Act, the only effect they produced among the independent tenant farmers in the Ulster counties was to increase their sense of the great obligation they were under to Mr. Gladstone, and to make them to him more personally and politically devoted.

CHAPTER XXI

1881—1882.

Carrying the New Land Act into Effect—Appointment of the Principal Commissioners—Mr. Parnell's Attempt to Prevent the Tenants Going into the Courts—Mr. Gladstone's Denunciation of Mr. Parnell followed by a Summary Arrest—Gratitude in Ulster to Mr. Gladstone—Earl Cowper's Visit as Lord Lieutenant to Belfast—The Election of Catholic and Protestant Mayors—Contrast between Dublin and Belfast—Sir Edward P. Cowan.

As soon as this second great Irish Land Act became law, steps were taken to provide the judicial machinery for carrying it into effect. The three principal Land Commissioners were Mr. John O'Hagan, Mr. Litton, and Mr. Vernon. Efforts were of course made by the Land Leaguers to prejudice the minds of the people against the Commissioners. In Ulster, and wherever in Ireland the tenants were independent of the Land League, those Commissioners were admitted to have been fairly chosen, with a leaning rather to the side of the farmers than of the landlords. Mr. Vernon, who was called by the Nationalists "a landlord's man," as the phrase goes, besides being a landlord himself, had been connected with the management of some important estates. It could not be said that he was a gentle-

man without experience in the duties to which he had been appointed. Mr. Litton, cousin of Master Litton, so well known in Dublin, was the Ulster Liberal representative in the county of Tyrone whom Mr. Thomas A. Dickson had announced by placard that he had induced to come forward as a candidate on the eve of the elections in the Irish constituencies. He had taken an able and active part during the session in the long discussions of the Land Bill, and been the author of several valuable amendments in the interests of the tenants. Mr. John O'Hagan, the legal commissioner, was an Irish Catholic, and the son-in-law of Lord O'Hagan, the Irish Lord Chancellor. He was a good lawyer and an amiable and accomplished man, with the most cultivated literary tastes. He had not long before published a metrical translation in English of the "Song of Roland," which had been much admired. He had, too, been a member of the Young Ireland party. He had still Nationalist sympathies, which at a later period of his life, when his judicial work was done and he was sinking into his grave, he again publicly avowed.

After the principal Commissioners had begun their duties, their sub-commissioners were to be appointed and the course of proceedings arranged. This caused considerable delay. Before the new tribunals for fixing rents could get fairly to the work, they were denounced by Mr. Parnell and his Land Leaguers. The Nationalist leader, as he had become, did what he could to prevent the tenants availing themselves of the benefit of the Act. He cautioned

them against entering the Land Courts at all, until some test cases had been taken and brought to a judicial decision. Then he said it would be time enough to form an opinion on the value of the Act, and the liberality of the sub-commissioners and principal Commissioners to the tenants whose cases they had to decide. He stated truly enough that the principles of the Land Act were not the same as the principles of the Land League, and, in retaliation for the determination of the Government to carry into effect their Coercion Act, he continued not obscurely to advise a strike against rents. What Mr. Parnell said his colleagues of the Land League repeated. While they talked about economic rents, they kept in the background the fact, which had been publicly avowed by their leader, that the land question was used for forcing on Home Rule. Under such circumstances it was of course quite impossible to satisfy Mr. Parnell and his followers. While they asked for one thing, they wanted another. No Irish Land Act, no decision of Land Commissioners could meet the wishes of the Land Leaguers with Mr. Parnell doing all he could to prejudice the tenants against the measure and the Government.

Yet in Ulster at least the first decisions given by the sub-commissioners, and afterwards confirmed on appeal, were not considered as unfair to the tenants. On an average they gave a reduction of about 22 per cent. in the amount of rent. In his evidence before the Select Committee on May the 1st, 1894, Mr. Fitzgerald, the Land Commissioner, stated that in

the year ending in the August of 1882 the rents were on the average reduced by 25 per cent. As the year 1881 closed the reductions undoubtedly appeared large. The landlords generally regarded these decisions with dismay. Sir Stafford Northcote denounced the Land Courts as revolutionary tribunals, declared that they were doing work they were never intended to do, and exhorted the landlords to hold their souls in patience until Parliament met, when he assumed that they would as a matter of course obtain redress.

To find legal tribunals deciding on more or less satisfactory evidence what was a fair rent seemed to Conservatives at first a startling phenomenon. The executive committee of the Land League, however regarded the new Land Act as their most dangerous enemy, and became more and more violent in their denunciations. Mr. Parnell declared that the landlords were only entitled to the bare value of the soil; but when asked to reduce certain rents in Dublin, he stated that tenant-right did not apply to towns. It has been candidly admitted by the literary exponent of Parnellism, as then understood, that the object of the men who were so remorselessly directing the Land League for Home Rule objects was that "the changes in the rent should be sweeping and revolutionary, not small nor halting." To judge the Land Act on such a principle as this was considered even by those who had been most energetic in advocating a thorough reform in the relations between landlords and tenants in Ulster as most ungenerous, unfair, and even preposterous. Neither the first nor the

second Land Act was intended to produce a revolution: the Act then being carried out was to prevent a revolution, and not to be subversive of all proprietary rights on the part of the landlords. Mr. Gladstone himself in introducing the measure had emphatically declared that the Irish rents were on the whole not unfair, that by the inquiry of the Bessborough Commission the landlords themselves had been tested, and had stood the test.

He naturally felt shocked at Mr. Parnell's conduct. Speaking at Leeds, the Prime Minister stated that the Irish Nationalist leader and his party were only a handful of men in Parliament, not entitled to be called a party at all, that Mr. Parnell sought to deprive the tenants of the advantages of the new Land Act, and that, lest the people of England should win the hearts of the Irish nation, he had a new and enlarged gospel of plunder to proclaim. He went on to say that the conflict then being waged was between the law on one side and lawlessness on the other, that the first condition of civil society remained to be fulfilled, "and then," declared Mr. Gladstone, "I say without hesitation the resources of civilisation against its enemies are not yet exhausted." These were memorable words. It was evident that something more was contemplated than the merely ordinary operation of the law against the agrarian revolutionists of the Land League.

What step Mr. Gladstone was then meditating soon appeared. The speech was delivered on Friday, October the 7th. It was replied to by

Mr. Parnell himself at Wexford on the following Sunday. He met with a most enthusiastic reception. His language was most defiant. Mr. Gladstone's brave words, he said, had a ring about them like the whistle of a schoolboy to keep up his courage on going through a churchyard by night. The following Thursday morning, when intending to go to another Land League meeting at Naas, two policemen came into Mr. Parnell's bedroom and presented him with some other documents the Lord Lieutenant's warrant for his summary arrest. On that very day Mr. Gladstone had to be presented in the Guildhall of London with the freedom of the city. He had prepared a dramatic scene. In replying to the address of the Corporation, he declared that the first step in the vindication of law under the rights of property, the freedom of the land, and the first elements of political life and civilisation, had been taken by the arrest of Mr. Parnell and his colleagues. The Irish Nationalist leader had just then been placed under lock and key in Kilmainham jail.

Here it is not necessary to dwell in any detail on the miserable scenes which followed. The No-Rent Manifesto, which had for some time been foreshadowed, was issued. Mr. Parnell in Kilmainham jail seemed more powerful than Mr. Gladstone in Downing Street. Lawlessness was deified. Mr. Forster, as the Irish Chief Secretary, was represented as a ruthless oppressor. Having indeed, as he himself once said, the old Puritan blood in his veins, with a great love for the Bible, conscious of his good intentions, his soul

naturally revolted at the injustice, the systematic misrepresentation, the great and cruel lies of which he was the object. In the North of Ireland he had the sympathy of all the loyal population, whether Liberal or Conservative. While the Land League went to the utmost extreme; while the people were called upon on patriotic principles to pay no rents, and to treat as marked men holding their lives in their hands those who did; while the newspaper *United Ireland*, utterly wild in its appeals to popular passion and lawless agrarianism, had, with other Land League journals, to be suppressed; while many avowedly seditious meetings in the South and West had to be prohibited by proclamation; while Mr. Shaw, Mr. Butt's successor in the leadership of the old Home Rule party, had to withdraw from the Association as becoming revolutionary, in Ulster the cry of "gratitude to Mr. Gladstone" was loudly raised, and his refusal to visit the Northern province was received with general regret. There were two Ulster elections during the recess, one for the county of Tyrone in consequence of the acceptance by Mr. Litton of one of the Land Commissionerships, the other for the county of Derry, on Lord O'Hagan's resignation of the Irish Lord Chancellorship and the appointment of Mr. Hugh Law to that high judicial office. For both the vacant seats Liberal candidates were returned, Mr. Thomas A. Dickson, not yet a Home Ruler, for Tyrone, Mr. A. Porter, the Irish Solicitor-General, for the county of Derry. Efforts were made to depreciate the new Land Act; but the tenant farmers,

independent of Land League influences, continued to be on the whole satisfied with the provisions. They were attentively watching the proceedings of the sub-commissioners in determining the judicial rents. They strongly disapproved of lawlessness and violence in the South and West, against which the Government, with all the powers of the new coercive statute, seemed to be carrying on an almost unequal contest.

In November it was reported that the Lord Lieutenant and Chief Secretary were both about to resign. But the Lord Lieutenant had accepted an invitation from the Mayor and Corporation of Belfast to visit the town, not yet a city. Earl Cowper could not, as representing Mr. Gladstone's Government, go through the towns in the South and West. In Dublin he and Mr. Forster were both subject to many annoyances, and were incurring serious danger. The Invincibles were then secretly at work, and, as was afterwards shown, Mr. Forster was already marked out for their vengeance.

But in Belfast Earl Cowper was heartily welcomed by both Conservatives and Liberals. There was not a discordant note. The Orangemen received the Liberal Viceroy with respect as her Majesty's representative. He attended a banquet given by the Mayor and Corporation, where he delivered a speech which gave much satisfaction to both the Liberals and Conservatives present.

He began his part of the proceedings by a somewhat dramatic incident. He addressed the Mayor as

"Sir Edward Cowan." He had, in the private room, before sitting down at the table, knighted the Mayor. The manner in which the compliment was paid gave much pleasure; it was applauded by all parties. In a Town Council in which the Liberals were the exception the Liberal Lord Lieutenant was enthusiastically received. He said himself that his visit to Belfast was the most pleasing incident in his Irish Viceroyalty. On the other side of the Boyne crime seemed to dog the footsteps of those who had to cause the law to be obeyed, and to wage war against the men whom Mr. Gladstone, as Prime Minister, had declared to be carrying out a policy of public plunder.

But in Belfast everything was peaceful and loyal. The Lord Lieutenant, representing not only the Queen, but Mr. Gladstone's Government, found himself among a population which, from the highest to the lowest, in spite of political differences, treated him courteously, and indeed with every manifestation of good will. He was subsequently told, too, that the merchants of Belfast, whatever might be their politics, were all Free Traders, an unfortunate utterance on this subject by the Chairman of the Harbour Board having been promptly contradicted by the President of the Chamber of Commerce, one of the most eminent representatives of the linen trade. A sentence spoken by Lord Cowper at this civic banquet was cheered by the guests; but afterwards denounced by the Nationalists. "We have driven," said his Excellency, "crime beneath the surface." Lord Cowper was told by the Land Leaguers and their

Home Rule sympathisers that he ought not to boast of having driven crime beneath the surface, that it was wiser statesmanship to let it come out. Unfortunately, as had already been painfully shown, and was soon afterwards to be still more fully proved, it was only too ready to come out. Earl Cowper left Belfast, as he had entered the town, with all manifestations of good will. There was something sad in the remarks Lady Cowper made privately to the Mayoress, repeating indeed nearly what Lord Cowper had said in his public speech: "We have thoroughly enjoyed our visit; it is such a contrast to what we have met with elsewhere."

This viceregal visit began on Tuesday, the 22nd of November, and continued until the following Saturday. Earl and Countess Cowper were the guests of Sir Thomas M'Clure, to whom Lord Dufferin had lent his mansion at Clandeboye for their reception. Sir Thomas was Lord Dufferin's vice-lieutenant for the county of Down, as well as one of the members for the county of Derry. After the entertainments in the evening he accompanied Lord and Lady Cowper in the train to Clandeboye in his vice-lieutenant's red uniform, surmounted by a large white beaver hat. This was provocative of much suppressed merriment, of which Sir Thomas, though not his distinguished guests, was unconscious. Besides the banquet in the Town Hall, there were a ball given by the Mayor and Mayoress, a reception at Clandeboye, an excursion down the lough, a luncheon by the Harbour Commissioners, and visits to all the principal

institutions and large commercial and manufacturing establishments. Nowhere was the Lord Lieutenant more enthusiastically received than by the workmen at the large and growing shipyard of Messrs. Harland and Wolff. Yet the great majority of the men were believed to be Conservatives and Orangemen.

The visit had its foil. The Nationalist newspapers could not conceal their vexation at such a display of loyal enthusiasm in the most Conservative town in Ireland to a Liberal Lord Lieutenant, who was with Mr. Forster administering the new Coercion Act of Mr. Gladstone's Government. The most prominent of those newspapers in Dublin, the *Freeman's Journal*, through its correspondent, represented the Lord Lieutenant's reception as cold. Nothing could be more contrary to the fact. To this misrepresentation Lord Cowper himself alluded at the luncheon given by the Harbour Commissioners. He said: "I confess I was under the impression the day I came here, also yesterday and the day before, that I had received a most enthusiastic welcome. My impression was, when I found the streets all the way from the railway station to the Town Hall crowded so that my carriage could hardly pass in consequence of the immense number of people that had assembled, and from the number of most loyal and enthusiastic addresses I received, that I had had a most enthusiastic reception. I was surprised to find that I was altogether mistaken. A widely spread paper has even told that I had a very cold reception, and that the coldness was a subject of general conversation. I may be mis-

taken now in believing your reception enthusiastic, but all I can say is that I shall continue to cherish the delusion." This declaration was received with loud and repeated cheers from the highly representative assembly in the long room of the Harbour Office.

The success of this visit was very much owing to the admirable tact and sound judgment of the newly made knight, Sir Edward P. Cowan. It was a somewhat arduous task to entertain a Liberal Lord Lieutenant in so strongly Conservative a town as Belfast. It was still more arduous because the Mayor himself was a Liberal. For many years Belfast was reproached by Nationalists in Dublin for only electing Conservative Mayors. In Dublin a practice, something like an unwritten law, had prevailed of choosing alternately a Conservative and Liberal Mayor. But this was before the Nationalists acquired the ascendency in the Dublin Corporation. At this time there was in the Irish metropolis a Nationalist Lord Mayor, and ever since there have continued to be Nationalist Lord Mayors. The boast has been and is that in Dublin the majority in the Corporation show their liberality by occasionally electing a Protestant Lord Mayor, while in Belfast, it is said, a Catholic Mayor is unknown, and there are no Catholic municipal representatives. On this question there has been much misrepresentation, which ought to impose on no person who is not willing to be deceived. The Dublin Corporation will, it is true, elect Protestant as well as Catholic

Lord Mayors; but they must always be Nationalists. With a salary of three thousand a year these Nationalist Lord Mayors, whether Catholic or Protestant, are enabled to dispense hospitality on a very liberal scale, and to most of them this money is not believed to be a matter of indifference. At one time a thousand pounds was voted yearly out of the funds of the Belfast Corporation to the Mayor, but for a quarter of a century no such grant has been made. It was considered of doubtful legality. The Mayors of Belfast have since had to defray all their public expenditure out of their own pockets. The consequence has been that the more wealthy citizens have had to be chosen for the office. What has occurred in Dublin has just been the reverse in Belfast. In the large, progressive, and prosperous Northern town there has been a much better class of Mayors than there had previously been when they received salaries.

Sir Edward P. Cowan was one of the best. He had been appointed to the Chief Magistracy by his political opponents. He gained, indeed, his first election as an alderman for one of the wards in a strictly party contest, in which he was emulously supported by the Liberal Protestants and the Catholics, many of whom had not yet become uncompromising Nationalists acting independently of their old allies. Though a Liberal and a Unitarian, Sir Edward, by his considerate prudence, soon succeeded in disarming all opposition. In a thoroughly divided party and sectarian town he held the

mayoralty for two years, and during that time he could not be said to have made a single mistake nor a single enemy. Some time afterwards, as will be seen, it fell to his lot to entertain several very distinguished guests, who all expressed their obligations to him, and recognised both the firmness and independence of his political convictions and his eminently sympathetic and kindly qualities. As a host he could scarcely be said to have had an equal, and he certainly had not a superior. For his guests and the success of their visits he thought nothing done while anything was undone. The services he rendered to the Liberal party were great: they were generally delicate and difficult, such as very few men could perform. He, too, has gone. In referring to this loss especially, while having to dwell on so many others, I feel very much like the horseman who at midnight found himself unexpectedly riding in a churchyard over tombs. But having thus laid a stone on the cairn of my friend, I pass on. I pass on to the stirring political events, the changes of fortune, the revolution in party politics, and the apparent alterations in the characters of public men, unexampled hitherto in the long history of English Constitutional and Parliamentary government.

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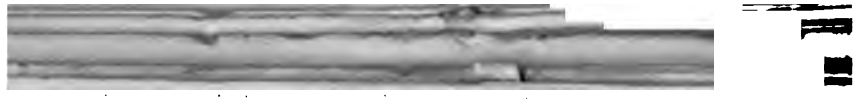

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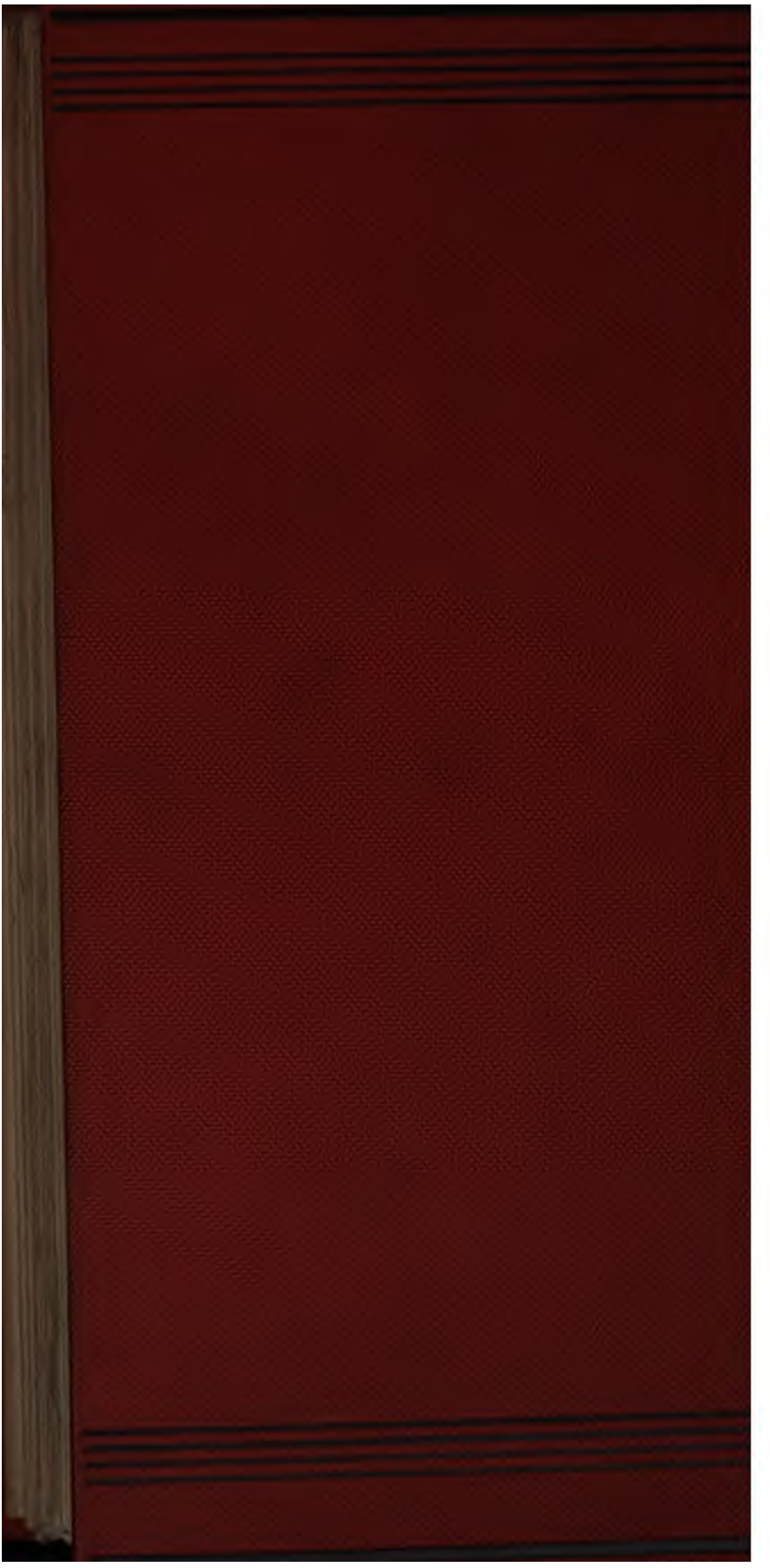
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